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SERMONS FOR
ALL THE SUNDAYS
AND FOR
THE CHIEF FEASTS OF THE YEAR

SERMONS

For All the Sundays, and for the Chief Feasts Throughout the Year

By

The Right Reverend JOHN S. VAUGHAN, D.D.

Bishop of Sebastopolis

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

THE MOST REVEREND JOHN J. GLENNON, D.D.

Archbishop of St. Louis, Mo.

"If the preacher is to profit his hearers, and not to be puffed up with empty joy and presumption, he must bear in mind that his function is MORE SPIRITUAL THAN VOCAL; for though it depends on audible words, its power and efficacy is not in WORDS, but in the SPIRIT, which utters them.

—St. John of the Cross.

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✠ PATRICK J. HAYES, D.D.

Archbishop of New York

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INTRODUCTION

A BOOK of sermons seeking publication has in these days a hard road to travel. The Catholic laity who read are not noted because of their number, nor even because of their critical taste. They may read magazines, story-books, or when more seriously inclined works of history, science, or apologetics; but a sermon book neither appeals to their frivolous, nor secures their more serious consideration.

And with the clergy, they are advised as students, and for very good reasons, not to read sermon books; while in their later years as priests their vision into the sermon book is generally hurried, and is never an occasion for boastfulness. Indeed, in the average priest's library, the sermon book, if found there at all, holds a useful, rather than a dignified position.

All of which, I believe, is unfair to the preacher who wishes to place before the larger circle of readers what pleased and helped the smaller group of auditors. Sermon making and publication has had a most respectable history. There is in the New Testament much of history, the record of miracles, the exposition of doctrine and of moral teaching, all of which, with the divine Christ its central figure, has been subject to criticism, and opposition. There is, however, the solitary exception—that chapter which arises above all criticism, and stands crowned before the ages—it is the chapter which contains the "Sermon on the Mount."

Following our blessed Lord's example and command, the Gospel was preached through these earlier ages; and if we have no sermon books published in these years, it is because the Gospel was preached as a lesson (in many cases learned from memory) to the faithful, who, few in number, held secret meetings and avoided all form of publicity. The truth was brought to them in many instances in the form of

the epistle or letter. So for these first years of the Church the prevailing form of publication was the epistle. A little later the apologetic. Then, the homily Until, the Church emerging from the catacombs and asylums, there arose a great era of preaching and of recording the sermons delivered. Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom were the chief among the preachers who inaugurated the new form. These days onward we have not alone the word preached as before, but the same becomes of record and takes its place in the great abounding literature of the Church.

Like the great tidal wave, that literature comes down the ages increasing in volume with the passing years, and the crest of its wave is composed of the sermons preached and written which reflect all the colors of its waters, and all the light of the sky. At times that wave-crest has been particularly resplendent. That time, for instance, when echoed the names of Bossuet, Fénelon, Massillon, Bourdaloue and Lacordaire, whose sermons blending the knowledge of God with the wisdom of the ages gave forth the splendors of faith with an art and an eloquence heretofore unknown.

Here let me say that instead of the criticism the sermon book meets to-day, based on its supposed narrow stilted form and its vapidity, that, properly understood, the sermon is the great means of bringing together all that is best in history, poetry and art, so as to explain the mysteries of life and the teachings of faith. Since the explanation is for the people, there must be in its setting that profound knowledge of those to whom the word is spoken. Hence, must be adopted whatever psychology teaches, both as regards the individual and the multitude.

To the discerning public, therefore, a book of sermons so constructed must necessarily appeal. Are they students of history? The sermon brings its salient points before them. So with the sister arts. Do they ask for faith? The sermon continues the word of God, and comes to them through the soul

inflamed, and the voice inspired of the preacher. Do they seek, furthermore, as some of our fiction readers to-day claim, a knowledge of the human heart in its best, or, if you will, its worst phases? This, too, must the speaker have in view and be himself the master thereof, so as to cause virtue to grow and vice to decline.

So I would like to see the sermon book take its place with clergy and laity as flowers in the sanctuary, the best offering to Christ that His children can make Him, and worthiest in our thoughts as we assemble in adoration.

I welcome this latest work of Bishop Vaughan; and I bespeak for it a cordial reception in America. The author as well as his distinguished brothers, living and dead, are well known in the American and English-speaking world; and Catholic literature owes much to the Vaughan name. The writer, however, in this instance does not rely upon a name, but on the merits of the book itself; and that these merits are ample is sufficiently proven from the many admirable volumes which have brought to the author unstinted praise, and have obtained for him an assured place in Catholic literature.

Distinguished alike for piety, dignity and diction, the book, like its author, has a message for our times, and deserves many readers.

✠John J. Glennon,
Archbishop of St. Louis.

St. Louis, Missouri, January 12, 1920.

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SERMONS FOR
ALL THE SUNDAYS
AND FOR
THE CHIEF FEASTS OF THE YEAR

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

This Life and the Next

Text:—"They shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty. When these things begin to come to pass, lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

MAN'S life upon earth is formed of a strange texture. It seems to be woven from a mingled yarn, half of joy and half of sorrow. His path through life is like the path through the summer woods, half in shadow, and half in sunshine. In this world, laughter is never very far removed from tears, and tears are often found to mingle with laughter. Such is the peculiarity of our present state. But it was not always thus. Man was created originally in a condition of complete and cloudless happiness. And in that state he would have continued, but for one thing, and that was his disobedience and rebellion against God, which opened the flood gates of divine wrath, and have ever since flooded the whole earth with pain and sickness and misery and sorrow and death.

Does not the Holy Scripture itself assure us that "Man's life upon earth is a warfare." (Job vii. 1.) And that "Man, born of woman, lives but for a short time, and that his life is full of miseries." (Job xiv. 1.) Does it not tell us further that "His days are as the days of a hireling"; and warn us that it is "through many tribulations that we are to enter into the Kingdom of God." (Acts xiv. 21.)

Nor is there any room to doubt it. Our own personal experiences serve but to confirm and to accentuate too plainly the same sad truth. There is not one of us, no not one even amongst the most favored children of fortune, who does not sometimes experience trouble and vexation and sickness and grief. And what is more, we are one and all under sentence

of death, though we know not the day nor the hour when that sentence will be carried out.

This distressful condition of things is so deeply impressed upon us, that it is as difficult to imagine a state of perfect bliss and of unclouded peace and prosperity as it is to imagine a land where the sun is always shining, and where rain and storm and wintry weather are utterly unknown. But "LIFT UP YOUR HEADS!" Such a land does in very truth exist, and what is more, my brethren, it will be entirely our own fault if we do not some day enter it, take possession of it and enjoy all its blessings.

It is a wonderful and a sublime fact, yet a most undeniable one, that God has actually prepared for you and for me an everlasting abode of such absolute and entrancing bliss that no man can so much as picture it or describe it. Yet its existence is as certain as the existence of this earth on which we are now living, and which we can see and feel. Indeed, it is far more firmly established and lasting, for the present earth shall pass away, whereas Heaven shall never pass away.

Can we describe this Promised Land? Can we present you with a true picture of it? No. We must confess we cannot. But why? Not because this land does not exist. Not because it is not a reality. No; we cannot draw an accurate image of it, solely because it is a land so immeasurably greater, grander, brighter and more splendid than anything we have ever seen, or read about, or heard of, that there is nothing to which we can compare it. Indeed it may be safely asserted, that, could we draw an adequate picture of it in human language, it would not be worth having.

The blessed in Heaven know what it is. And of course the Holy Spirit of God knows, but it is impossible for us even to suspect its beauty and magnificence, for the simple reason that it not only surpasses our wildest dreams and the most extravagant creations of our fancy, but because it surpasses them by

an immeasurable distance. Nothing that we can conceive can come within measurable distance of the reality.

What does God, who fashioned it, say of it? He declares that "eye hath not seen, that ear hath not heard, and that mind has not conceived" the delights which He has prepared for those who love Him. Let us consider these inspired words carefully "EYE HATH NOT SEEN." During the course of our lives we have, no doubt, come across many objects of exceptional beauty and have gazed upon a great variety of exquisite scenes. We have contemplated the arching heavens, studded with innumerable stars, glittering like diamonds in a cloudless sky. If we have traveled to the antipodes we may have watched (as I remember doing on my way to Australia) the unparalleled grandeur of the blazing sun sinking into the tropical waters of a waveless sea. Never have I gazed upon anything so superbly magnificent. The vast expanse of waters, extending as far as eye could reach, seemed transformed into the purest liquid gold; the entire expanse of sky appeared to be all on fire. The heavens were ablaze. The whole of the distant horizon was streaked and mottled with the richest colors of the solar spectrum. There was the softest salmon pink, gradually deepening, till it became a glorious red, then a glowing scarlet, which then transformed itself again into purple, and blue, and green, and yellow, and gold. In fact, changed like a witch's oils, from one dazzling hue to another. At length the setting sun, with half of its bulk already sunk beneath the waste of waters, shot forth its burnished rays in straight parallel lines, right across the immense ocean, and formed a matchless pathway of glittering, shimmering gold, which seemed as though it must lead straight up to Heaven's gates, where dwells the eternal and infinite God.

Even such purely earthly scenes help to lift one's thoughts on high to the Creator of all. But grand as they are; beautiful as they are; we well know that

the least beauty of the next world is infinitely greater still. On such scenes as I have vainly tried to describe the eye of man may indeed gaze; but no human eye has ever seen, no human eye CAN ever see, at least in this life, anything that can distantly compare with the glory and beauty of Heaven. And for this statement we have the authority of God Himself: "Eye hath not seen the things that God has prepared for those who love Him."

"EAR HATH NOT HEARD." The range of the eye is very limited, as compared with that of the ear. What my eye beholds is restricted wholly and entirely to my own personal experience and observation. The ear, on the other hand, has a very much more extended reach, for it sees, as it were, with the eyes of others. It can listen to the accounts given by other men; by travellers, explorers and discoverers. It can learn from others all that they have to narrate of their varied and perhaps unique experiences. But even from them we cannot gather any idea of the beauty and splendor of Heaven. For, however enchanting and thrilling and exquisite may be these accounts, they must necessarily all fall immeasurably short of the beauty of God's own Kingdom. But we are assured not only that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard" but—that "NEITHER HATH IT ENTERED INTO THE MIND OF MAN TO CONCEIVE WHAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." Wider and freer in its range than either eye or ear is the range of man's fancy and imagination. Indeed, to fancy there is hardly any boundary assignable. Thus, though we have never actually seen streets of pure gold, nor houses of precious stones, nor doors of pearls, nor skies of gleaming silver, nor rivers of luscious wine, still we are quite able to imagine such things. If indeed we consult the compositions of the poets and other writers of fiction, we shall often come across wonderful though of course wholly fanciful descriptions of quite surprising loveliness and splendor. But there is one

thing that we shall *never* meet with in any of their writings; one thing that even the most fervid and far-reaching fancy can never image forth, and that is a true and adequate description of the abode which God has prepared for His faithful servants.

Even were an angel to come down from Heaven and to speak to us familiarly, as a friend converses with a friend, he would be utterly unable to communicate to us any idea of its ineffable character. Why? Well, because there are no words, either in the English or in any other language, that could express his thoughts. Every word which we employ has indeed a meaning, but in all cases it is an earthly meaning. No words exist which are capable of expressing an experience which no man living has ever felt. It would be like trying to describe to one born blind, the beauty of the rainbow, or the component hues of the solar spectrum. Should you speak to a blind man about red or blue or green, he would not and could not guess what on earth you meant. He would say: "Red? What is red? Put it to my ear. Let me hear it. Press it against my tongue that I may taste it." Then we could only reply: "Red is something that you cannot hear. It has no sound. Neither can you taste it, nor smell it, nor touch it. There is but one only means of arriving at a true knowledge of the meaning of red and blue and green and the rest. You must have eyes with which to see."

Now, beloved brethren, if it is impossible to convey to a man born blind any true idea of color, it is very much *more* impossible to convey to anyone in this life any adequate idea of the beauty and the delights of Heaven. To understand them one must actually experience them. Indeed, we must confess, with a deep sense of humiliation, that we know so little of these joys that in our attempts to describe Heaven we are reduced to the necessity of declaring rather what is NOT to be found there, than what is to be found. Thus we affirm that there is no pain, no suffering, no sorrow, no disease, no death. We

say that every tear shall be wiped away from our eyes; that we shall be freed from poverty, weariness, disgrace and the agony of baffled hopes and unrequited love; that we shall never more suffer from hunger and thirst, from heat and cold; that we shall never, never be called upon to listen to the sounds of fighting, quarrelling and injurious words; and that no care, anxiety, dread or fear shall ever again molest us. In short, everything that can trouble or disturb or sadden or afflict us, will be forever banished from that Home of eternal peace.

Perhaps you will say: merely to be freed, and forever, from every earthly misery is a great matter; and so it is, but still that is far from constituting the bliss of Heaven. Heaven is not the mere absence of every evil, but rather the full possession of every conceivable good, and the perfect enjoyment of every possible delight. Among the least of these goods are perfect health of body; absolute beauty of form; with every organ and every sense and every articulation, and every limb faultless and complete. In fact, a dream of matchless loveliness and splendor, such as no tongue can describe.

Furthermore, even the body will be endowed with new and special gifts. It will shine more brilliantly than the sun; it will be impervious to disease and to pain, sickness and death. Nothing will ever be able to injure or wound it, or to afflict it, or do it any harm. Then it will be endowed with such agility that it will be able to pass from one place to another, however far apart, more rapidly than lightning. In a word, its movements, though completely under the control of the glorified soul, will enjoy almost the freedom and the quickness of thought. Furthermore, its movements will not be hampered nor in any way interfered with by any obstacles. Just as our Lord's risen body entered the Upper Chamber, where the Apostles were assembled, "the doors being closed," so the bodies of the just, made perfect, will possess the capacity of passing through every obstacle, just as readily as the

sun's rays pass through plate glass without either injuring or being injured. In short, the risen bodies will, so far as their gifts are concerned, resemble spirits. That is to say, though they will not be actually spirits they will be spiritualized and share in the qualities of a spirit. As St. Paul expresses it: "It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body," but it will still be a body.

But so far we have spoken of the lesser and inferior of heaven's gifts. After all, the body and its prerogatives are a very secondary affair. The noblest and highest part of man is his soul. It is upon that we must look as the chief source and centre of his joy and happiness.

In the first place all its powers will be enormously increased and extended. Without study or labor it will understand and recognize all the wonders of the creation. The sciences that men now spend years and years to acquire will be the common possession of all the blessed. The secrets of earth and sea and sky that the learned are perpetually striving to unfold, the wonders of the stars and distant constellations which occupy and absorb the astronomer during the long and silent vigils of the night, will all be fully known and clearly understood without difficulty and without exertion. In fact, the most learned and renowned scientist in this world would appear but as a simpleton and a fool, compared to even the very least in the Kingdom of God.

But not only shall our minds be filled with knowledge, what is still more important, our hearts will also overflow with love: a source of endless happiness and delight. In the first place, because we shall be surrounded by innumerable friends, each as perfect and as beautiful as ourselves. The Apostles and the Patriarchs, the Martyrs and brave Confessors, the Virgins and Religious of both sexes, as well as the countless multitudes of the faithful will all be our personal friends and loving companions. Though

there will be different degrees of splendor and beauty, for the blessed will differ among themselves "as star differs from star in glory," yet there will be no coldness, nor stiffness, nor shyness, nor restraint, nor awkwardness between one and another. Quite the contrary, the most perfect concord and harmony will reign between one and all. Each will be bound to each by a love so strong, so deep, and so thorough that nothing will ever be able to diminish or to interfere with it.

We all know the happiness that arises from the presence of those we love. Parents and children; brothers and sisters; bridegrooms and brides have all experienced it. We are assured by those who ought to know that there is no joy so intense as that which is experienced by a young couple who have fallen in love. The Poet says: "There is nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream."

This may be true of earth. It is not true of Heaven. There our love of our companions will far exceed any experience that is possible on earth, and be a source of far intenser delight. Just imagine being deeply in love, not with one individual, but with each of the millions and millions that no man can number, all of whom will be our companions hereafter! If the love of a single person can confer such happiness here below, who will measure the happiness arising from the love of so many? Here, of course, we should be unable to endure such love. It would overwhelm us and we would die of sheer joy, but in Heaven our capacities are enlarged, and we shall be strengthened to bear that weight of happiness, and far more still.

So again, if here on earth we love those who are dear to us, it is often in spite of their faults, and even though they may be neither beautiful in face nor comely and graceful in form. But in the next life our companions will have no faults; they will be, in themselves, eminently loveable, for they will be perfect in every way without any blemishes, or weaknesses, or imperfections, either of body, or of mind, or of char-

acter, so that it will be impossible not to love them, and impossible not to love them *intensely*.

If we had time we might go on expatiating for hours upon this theme, but it is time to remind you that so far we have not so much as touched on the real and essential source of Heaven's joys.

The very essence of Heaven is not to be found in the presence either of angels or of saints; nor, indeed, in anything created whatsoever, but in the full and certain possession of God Himself. Just as God is separated from all His creatures by an infinite distance, and just as He is infinitely above them all, so the joy arising from the sight of God is immeasurably greater than that which arises from any other source. Whatever joys we experience from creatures, whether it be from persons or possessions, are necessarily finite. But the joy which arises from the possession of God is in itself infinite; and would be infinite to us if we could embrace Him in His fullness. It is only our finite nature that makes that impossible. Still it suffices to fill to overflowing every corner and crevice of our whole being, and affords us all the happiness and delight of which we are capable.

We may compare all the other joys of Heaven to the rays of light scattered by the sun; but the joy arising out of the presence of God we must compare to the glorious sun itself. The one being but a mere reflection of the other.

Who can describe God? Who can picture His beauty! No living soul. It beggars all thought and expression. We may form some idea of the mind of a great sculptor or of a great painter by contemplating the works of his hands. So we may form some faint and unworthy image of God's beauty, by contemplating the beauty of earth, sea and sky; but it is an utterly unworthy conception and cannot approach the reality. For the finite cannot adequately reflect the infinite.

But what I wish particularly to remind you of today is that that abode of entrancing happiness and

ecstatic delight, with all its glory and with all its wonders, is destined for you and placed within your reach on the easiest possible terms.

Take an ordinary working man; or any woman or girl laboring at the mills, or in the mines, or shops, or places of business, or in domestic service, or anywhere else. And ask yourselves how often do such as these encourage themselves by the thought that, in a few years, if only they are faithful, God in His goodness will put them in possession of His own magnificent Kingdom.

It all sounds very much like a fairy tale; it seems far, far too good to be true. Yet nothing is more certain. You remember reading the fanciful tale of Cinderella. She was supposed to be a poor neglected girl, ugly and awkward, who was left to clean up the dishes and work while others went to places of amusement to enjoy themselves. And then a kind Fairy takes compassion on her, and by a simple waive of her wand changes her into the most beautiful of Princesses, magnificently dressed, and attended by innumerable pages and attendants. Well, that is of course only an idle fairy tale; but the sudden and complete transformation of a poor, humble and faithful man, whether he be a laborer or a beggar, into a Prince of God's heavenly Court unspeakably beautiful and rich beyond compare, is no fairy tale, but a most certain and undoubted fact. One may stand by the bedside of such a poor despised beggar: such for instance as was Blessed Benedict Labre. One may find him dying in a dirty, unfurnished, dismal hovel with nothing to cover him but some rags. The window panes are broken; the door hangs half off its hinges, and the bleak wind whistles through the open rafters. At last he dies. He has been anointed, absolved, and now his soul leaves the fragile tenement of the body and is with God.

When lo! his whole condition changes. He can hardly believe his senses. The dirty hovel has disappeared. The rags that covered him are no longer

visible. He thought he was a nobody, an outcast; he finds himself a mighty prince. He thought he was poor and destitute; he finds his riches are not only exhaustless, but imperishable and eternal. He thought himself despised, he finds himself surrounded by loving friends and companions. The words he so longed to hear have fallen like the sweetest music upon his ear: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou wast faithful over few things, I will place thee over many things; enter into the joy of the Lord."

Observe the Supreme Judge does not say: "the joy of the Lord shall enter into thee," for that celestial joy is too great, too vast; but He says: "enter thou into the joy of the Lord," as though He would wish us to understand that the joy of Heaven is so immeasurable, so limitless, so infinite that it surrounds the blessed like some boundless sea which cannot enter into them, but into which they must cast themselves, and lose themselves in its endless depths of undreamed delights and unexplored splendors for ever and ever.

Is not this a destiny worth preparing for? Is not this worth a life of loving obedience and loyalty to God? Full soon the years will pass; only a short time yet of toil and care awaits us; a few more opportunities of exercising virtue, and of meriting more grace, and then God will send His messenger Death to summon us before Him. Then, if we have done well, we shall really experience that immense, that inconceivable happiness of which we have so inadequately spoken. Then indeed we shall "lift up our heads, because the full fruits of our redemption are at hand."

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

There Is but One True Church of Christ

Text:—"Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ; that with ONE mind and with ONE mouth you may glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."—(*From the Epistle of the day.*)

WHEN we look around and consider the many millions of Christians in all parts of the world we cannot help being struck by their extraordinary variety. Methodists, Episcopalians, Calvinists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and a great many other sects, too numerous to mention, all claim the title of Christian and profess to be followers of Christ. And we Catholics, too, through courtesy are accustomed to refer to them as Christians. But are they really such? If we define a Christian as "a person who professes the religion of Christ," then it follows, with all the rigor of logic, that they have no right whatever to the title. The religion taught by our blessed Lord was one and indivisible. He did not found different religions, as one might establish different forms of government, to suit the different characters and peculiarities of different nations and peoples. He nowhere speaks of His "Churches"; it is always of His Church, in the singular number. There is no trace of National Churches, such as we now find, but all were to be united into one indivisible body, so that all might "with ONE mind and with ONE mouth glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

However inconvenient and disagreeable this fact may be to our separated brethren, its truth is borne in upon us by so many and such powerful arguments that we fail to see how any one can gainsay it. Time will not permit us to do more than just touch upon some of the more important of these, though each of them really deserves a special sermon to itself.

The First Proof; the Church Must be One Because it is True

The Church of God must be true, because God Himself is the sovereign Truth. But, if it be true, then it must be one. Truth is essentially the same in all places, and in absolute agreement with itself. There is nothing of the chameleon about it. It does not alter to suit the peculiarities and the idiosyncrasies of this nation or of that. In Christ's reply to Pilate we have the most solemn and the most public declaration of His mission: "For this was I born," He says, "and for this came I into the world, *viz.*, that I should bear witness to the TRUTH."

Now, two Churches teaching irreconcilable doctrines cannot by any possibility be "bearing witness to the TRUTH." One at least must be bearing witness to a lie. If, in place of two contradictory Churches, there be two hundred or more, it still remains indisputable that only one of the number can be teaching the whole Truth, as set forth by Jesus Christ. For, whatever may be said of other Churches, founded by Luther, Calvin, Henry and Elizabeth, etc., Christ's Church is the "Pillar and ground of Truth." (1 Tim. iii. 15.) It is on account of this obvious necessity, that St. Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost, assures us that there is but "one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism." There are many erroneous Faiths in the world to-day, but to imagine two or more different yet equally TRUE Faiths is as absurd as to imagine two or more true Gods. Truth—real Truth—must lead to unity. For, as truth is the selfsame all the world over, all who accept it will be in complete agreement with it, and with one another. Why are all men, without exception, in absolute unity as regards the Multiplication Table? Simply, because they all possess and accept the selfsame truth, *viz.*, that twice two are four, and the rest. So soon as one Church differs from another, on any one dogma, one of them has departed from the Truth. Error has crept in and divisions have arisen.

Second Proof; Christ Commanded His Apostles to Teach One and the Selfsame Doctrine to the Whole World

Not only did Christ bear testimony to the TRUTH Himself, but He chose out certain trustworthy men, named Apostles, and commanded them to teach this same TRUTH to the entire World. "And Jesus spake to them saying: all authority has been given unto Me, in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations (catholicity in PLACE), baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you (catholicity in DOCTRINE), and lo! I am with you, even unto the end of the world" (catholicity in TIME).

Thus, in obedience to the express command of God-made man, we find the Apostles teaching and instructing the people. They taught, not their own views, nor their own pet theories, but "all things whatsoever I (*i. e.*, God) have commanded." In short, they taught others what God taught them. The question is: Were these doctrines true or false? They must be infallibly true, since they came from God. But, if true, they must be ever the same, both in time and in place, and with one nation as with another, and "to the end of the world."

Man, when left to himself, is liable to error. Even the Apostles might easily have gone astray, had they been abandoned to their own devices. But God guaranteed them the continuous and divine assistance of His own guiding presence, as well as that of His Holy Spirit. Harken to His words. After commanding His Apostles to teach, He at once dispels any doubts from their minds, on the plea of their natural inability and human frailty, by the assurance: "Lo! I am with you." So long as He, the Infinite Truth, remains with them, to guide and to enlighten them, they can not possibly go astray, or make any mistake in the deliverance of their message. But His divine presence

was promised to the very end. Not only, therefore, to the Apostles themselves, but to all who should succeed them, "even unto the end of the world." If Christ's promise was to be accomplished, then it is perfectly evident that it was not limited to the twelve Apostles, since their lives did not outrun the natural span.

Third Proof; Because the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, Remains With the Teaching Church Forever

Before our Lord ascended into Heaven, He made a solemn promise to His Apostles. He said: "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Since God had constituted the Apostles witnesses, they could be witnesses of TRUTH only; and their testimony might always be relied upon, for the simple reason that they were acting, not in virtue of their own unaided strength, but in virtue of the irresistible power of the Holy Ghost according to the words: "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." The same truth is stated still more explicitly and clearly by the beloved Disciple in his Gospel (xiv. 26). "The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send you in My name, shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." If that, dear brethren, does not mean infallibility, then I know not what it can mean. In another place (John xiv. 16) Christ says: "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter." To what purpose? Why, "That He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive."

Now surely if Christ promised to remain with the Teachers of His Church, and with their successors, and if He furthermore declared that He would send also the Holy Spirit to abide with them forever, then there can be but one only Church, *viz.:* the Church

which possesses the Divine Spirit of Truth according to the promise. For the "Spirit of Truth" cannot contradict Himself.

To affirm that the Spirit of Truth is with every warring sect, and with each of the hundreds of irreconcilable and contradictory religions, into which (so-called) Christianity is divided, seems to us to be little short of blasphemy.

Fourth Proof; Because God Has Made Eternal Damnation the Penalty of Disbelief in the Specific Message

It is solely because God is with His Church, and because He Himself protects her from so much as the bare possibility of error that mankind are justly bound, under the most awful sanction, to accept her teaching. Observe there is no latitude allowed, no freedom of choice, no PRIVATE JUDGMENT accorded to the multitudes addressed by the Apostles. Men and women were commanded to listen and accept. They were to find Salvation by embracing the definite teaching proposed to them authoritatively by the divinely commissioned teachers. This was taken to be such an essential condition of Salvation that any one whosoever, who refused to accept the Doctrine, was to be rigorously cut off and to be consigned to hell's fires. "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved," declares the Incarnate Son of God, "but he that believeth not, shall be damned." So that nothing less than eternal torments await those who (wilfully and deliberately and knowingly of course) reject what the Apostles and their successors teach, now and in the future, yea, even to the end of time. Why this awful threat? Why so appalling a sanction? Well, of course, because such persons are refusing to believe, not fallible man, but God; not a mere creature, but the Creator, even though He speak by the lips of His creature. This is clearly enough expressed by Jesus Christ when He said to the Teachers, whom He had appointed: "He that heareth you heareth

Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me," making no distinction between them and Himself on this point. What Church is it that still continues to teach in this authoritative manner? There is but one Church that so much as claims to be the infallible and unerring mouthpiece of Christ, and that is the Church Catholic or Universal; or what all men recognize as "The Roman Catholic Church."

Fifth Proof; Because Christ Prayed That His Church Might Be One

Christ is God, therefore to pray is with Him the same thing as to effect. Since then He prayed, "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be ONE even as We are one." (John xvii. 11.) It follows that His true adherents must, in truth, be one. For He prayed not only for His Apostles, but for all who would listen to their teaching. "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe in Me, through their word; that they *may all be ONE,* even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be ONE in Us." If the Unity subsisting among the true followers of Christ is to resemble the unity that obtains between the Father and the Son, it must above all things include unity of Faith and of doctrine, which denotes unity of spiritual truth. So much is clearly indicated by the very terms of the prayer of our Lord, just given, wherein He expressly says: "Sanctify them IN TRUTH."

Sixth Proof; Because Christ Made Unity the Great Mark or Characteristic by Which His Church Was to Be Distinguished From All Others

It is a fact of great significance that Christ prayed not only that His Church might be ONE. He did more. He decreed that this ONENESS should be so striking, so visible, and so readily recognized that it might serve as a guide to all sincere inquirers. It was

to be more. It was to be so wonderful and so admirable and so unique as to afford proof of the divine character of His mission. In all ages UNITY was destined by God to mark off His Church from every other, and to impress men with a sense of its authenticity. This Unity was to be the guarantee of its genuineness throughout the ages, not only to the student and to the historian, but to the man in the street, and to the common wayfarer, if he would only set aside prejudice and the influence of early training and tradition, and just open his eyes and look around for himself. Yes, our Lord asks that His followers might be ONE, "THAT THE WORLD MIGHT KNOW THAT THOU DIDST SEND ME." In short, He asks that His Church might display such a note of unity that the world itself would feel compelled to exclaim: *"Digitus Dei est hic";* the finger of God is here! Hence we are not surprised that the Catholic Church, though so vast, though so extended, and though consisting of men and women of every nation, race, color and tongue, is yet so essentially ONE that the startling fact cannot be explained on purely natural grounds. It presents such a spectacle to the world that any honest enquirer, who takes the trouble to examine it impartially, will be led to exclaim: "It is a work divine. It must have been founded by One who alone can guard and guide and hold together in peace and harmony such a vast number of wholly heterogeneous elements." "The glorywhich Thou hast given Me I have given them," says our Lord. Then, as if to lay further emphasis on the statement, He continues to petition, "that they may be perfected into ONE, *that the world may know that Thou didst send Me,* and lovest them even as Thou lovest Me." (John xvii. 22, 23.)

Seventh Proof; Founded on the Symbols Under Which Christ Refers to His Church

That the divine Founder of Christianity intended a real, close, and organic union between the various

members of His Church is abundantly established by the very figures and symbols which He makes use of in describing it. He speaks of it sometimes as (1) a House, sometimes as (2) a City, and again as (3) a Kingdom. Each of these figures clearly suggests the idea of unity and compactness. Each is one whole, made up of many parts, all of which are intimately correlated. A House, a City and a Kingdom! Each is a single complete entity. There is no antagonism nor want of harmony between their parts. For if there were they would not endure. This is explicitly enunciated by our Lord Himself who warns us (as though in view of the divisions existing among the various sects) that "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." (Matt. xii. 25.) A kingdom, though it may consist of many provinces, and many States, is nevertheless bound together into unity, inasmuch as all its inhabitants are subject to the same laws, governed by the same legislative Assembly, and placed under one and the same head, ruler or king. So, too, though the Church of God consists of many nations and embraces many countries, yet all are united under one supreme Head, submit to one sovereign authority, and accept the same doctrine, and "With one mind, and with one mouth glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Eighth Proof; Because Christ Spoke of His Church as (1) a Flock Under One Shepherd, as (2) a Vine, as (3) a Tree, and as (4) a Living Body

If we pass to other illustrations and figures made use of by our Lord, the case grows still stronger. He likens His Church to a Flock or Fold under ONE pastor; to a Vine, in which every part is united; to a Tree, in which every limb and branch draws its life and nourishment from the same trunk or stem, and to a Living Body, which possesses, perhaps, a more perfect organic unity than any other. Let us consider the

Church under the figure of a Tree. Christ says: "The Kingdom of Heaven (which is the Church) is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man (Christ Himself, the Man-God) took and sowed in a field (the field is the world), which is indeed the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than all herbs and becometh a Tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." (Matt. xiii. 31.)

In the case of a seed recently planted we contemplate small beginnings; a simple bud, a stem, a leaf; but as it grows, and by virtue of the great principles of life with which God has endowed it, it becomes more complicated. It puts forth numerous leaves, twigs and spreading branches in all directions, and in greater and greater abundance. Yet, observe, however many and however varied are the parts of a tree, all are intimately united and bound together. Every part shares in the one common life. The selfsame vivifying sap courses along from one extremity to the other. Not only is this UNITY of the most intimate kind, but it is absolutely essential. So essential indeed that if a single branch detaches itself from the parent stem, it forthwith perishes, and if even a single leaf loses its hold and flutters to the ground, it immediately withers and dies. Which of the many Churches now in existence corresponds to this description? Where is such unity as this to be found save in the Catholic Church? Let us apply the figure. If the Church is a Tree, then our Blessed Lord is the root and foundation; His Vicar, the Sovereign Pontiff, is the single trunk or stem. The Bishops throughout the world are the great limbs; the priests and pastors are the lesser branches or twigs, and the faithful are the innumerable leaves. Thus as even the most distant leaf on the topmost branch is in connection with the massive trunk that supports the whole structure and draws its life and nourishment from it, so each and every individual member of the Church is in connection with the infallible Vicar of Christ, from whom he draws the spiritual sap of divine truth. Take a Cath-

olic living, let us say, in India or Canada, or New Zealand or anywhere else you please. If a practical member of the Church of God he will be in communion with his parish priest; the priest will be in communion with his duly appointed Bishop; and the Bishop will be in direct communication with the Pope at Rome. And just as the sap rises in the trunk of a tree and passes through the immense limbs and so on through the lesser branches till it reaches the furthermost leaves, imparting to them vigor, freshness and life, so the pure doctrine of Christ, carefully protected from error by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, issuing from the lips of the visible Head of the Church, passes on to the Bishops and is from them conveyed to the priests of their respective dioceses, and finally preached by them to the faithful throughout the world. Thus it is evident that Jesus Christ by establishing His Church on Peter and his successors, while safeguarding them from error, has knit the whole Church together, and every member composing it, in a Unity corresponding in almost every respect to the unity that obtains in the case of a shrub or a tree. All Catholics believe the same truths, because all are taught by one and the same supreme authority. All are absolutely ONE in Faith and in Doctrine, because all are conscious of the foundation (Peter) on which they stand, and because all recognize the Voice of God in the voice of Peter. "Upon this rock I will build My Church." "Who heareth you, heareth Me." Though many other arguments might be adduced, perhaps enough has been said to prove that Christ determined that His Church should be ONE, and that all His followers should be united in the same Faith and in the same doctrine. But if He really wished this Unity to exist, and in such a striking form as to be a mark or character visible and conspicuous to all, it is quite certain that He must have established some principle of cohesion, some bond of union which should be at once simple in its application and efficacious in its results.

Now there are but two principles in possession. The one is the Protestant one, *viz.:* an infallible Bible. The other is the Catholic one, *viz.:* an infallible and living Teacher or Head, namely the Pope. Now it is quite certain that Christ knew what He was about. It is unthinkable that He, who decreed that His Church should be ONE, should have chosen a means wholly inadequate for the purpose. The Bible has been tried as a bond of unity for over three hundred years by the Protestant churches. It has been proved, and found wanting. So far from being a bond of unity, the Bible, interpreted by each man for himself, has proved a principle of division and disintegration. It separates and divides and breaks men up into hundreds of quarrelling sects. A leading article in that great representative Protestant London paper, "The Times," informs us that: "England alone is reputed to contain some SEVEN HUNDRED sects, each of whom proves a whole system of theology and morals from the Bible." (See "Times" of Jan. 13, 1884.) Such is the verdict of history.

On the other hand, the Principle of Unity which obtains in the Catholic Church draws all her members together and unites them in the closest possible harmony. Though the Catholic Church is vaster than all Protestant churches taken together, and though she counts among her children peoples of every race and language, and color, and civilization, yet she contrives to keep them all absolutely ONE in doctrine and in Faith. Our Lord promised that this would be so in order that the world might be able to distinguish His Church from all others. His promise has been most faithfully kept. She is conspicuously and manifestly ONE; and the world itself is bound to acknowledge this Unity, even though it is too proud and too self-willed to accept the logical consequence and to acknowledge her authority and to place itself in obedience to her.

I will not at this late hour delay you by producing many illustrations of this fact. But I will conclude

by setting before you at all events just one instance. It shall be in the form of a quotation from the London "Times" at the time of the Vatican Council in the year 1870. This is how that great Protestant journal sums up the situation in its leading article: "Seven hundred Bishops, more or less, representing all Christendom, were seen gathering around one altar and one throne partaking of the same divine mysteries, and rendering homage by turns to the same spiritual authority and power. As they put on their mitres or took them off, and as they came to the steps of the altar, or to the foot of the same spiritual Father, it was IMPOSSIBLE not to feel THE UNITY AND THE POWER OF THE CHURCH WHICH THEY REPRESENTED." (*Vide* issue of December 16, 1870.)

The decrees passed by this General Council were cheerfully accepted by between two and three hundreds of millions of Catholics scattered throughout the world. The mere handful of dissidents in Germany served only to render the general unanimity the more striking and conspicuous. Thus every member of the world-wide Church of God continues now, as before, "with ONE mind and with ONE mouth to glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The Fall of Man and the Fall of the Angels

Text:—"Rejoice in the Lord always. The Lord is nigh."—(*From the Epistle.*)

NOW that we are drawing near to the great solemnity of Christmas, when the Catholic Church throughout the world commemorates the admirable mystery of the Incarnation, it seems a fitting time to inquire more closely into the wondrous ways of God, and into the nature of His dealings with His creatures, as exemplified in this wondrous event.

It is true indeed, that men fell, and needed a redeemer. But man was not the only being to fall. The angels also prevaricated and rebelled against God, and stood in as sad a plight and in as hopeless a condition as man himself. If then, man was redeemed and offered a second chance, why were the angels not treated in like manner? If fallen man was told to dry his tears and to hope again, since the day of his delivery was at hand, why were the angels left to their fate without any second chance being offered to them?

At first glance, the angels seem to be more worthy of redemption, for are they not of a higher order of creation and a far nobler race? In their angelic nature they resemble God more closely than man does. They are pure spirits, without any admixture of earthly clay, and stand in no need of bodily organs. Their glorious intellects and splendid mental gifts lift them far above the lowly children of Adam, yet the startling fact remains, they were abandoned and left to reap the full effects of their momentary crime, whereas man was mercifully granted another opportunity of escaping the awful consequences of sin.

The question then, with which we wish to deal today is, why did God, in the fulness of His infinite wisdom, resolve to come down and die in agony to rescue

the one, while He condemned the other, at once without pity, to the eternal fires of hell?

The answer is, the angels were treated differently from man because the whole circumstances in the two cases were entirely different and God's justice and goodness induced Him to take every circumstance into account. We will point out the chief of these differences.

I. In the first place, the sin of the angels was, considered in itself, a *greater* sin. Why? Because the gravity of an offense depends not merely on the nature of the sinful act, considered by itself, but depends also upon the greater or lesser clearness with which its gravity is realized by the culprit. Now, the angels had a more perfect knowledge of the infinite majesty of God than it was possible for man to have. They realized in a manner far surpassing man's capacity the enormity of the offense they were guilty of in rebelling against their infinite Creator and Benefactor. Hence, their crime was more unpardonable, inasmuch as they sinned against a greater light and with a deeper knowledge. Man, of course, had knowledge enough and more than enough. He knew perfectly well that to disobey God was a serious matter and deserving of punishment. But he had not the keen, penetrating, subtle intellect of the angels. He had not the clear and precise conception of God's divine attributes, nor the deep and unmistakable appreciation of His claims upon their loyalty and submission, and, as a consequence, though undoubtedly guilty, our first parents were not *so* guilty, nor quite so utterly unworthy of all consideration, as were the rebel angels. This, then, may be taken as the first reason why they were actually treated with less rigor.

II. But there is a second reason; and that is to be found in the fact that the angels had none to tempt them but fell by reason of their own deliberate and personal choice. With man it was quite different. In fact, it would seem that, if left to himself, he might perhaps never have fallen at all. He did not stretch

out his hand and eat the forbidden fruit unsolicited and uninvited. His downfall was contrived and brought about by the cunning and the deliberate efforts of one immeasurably more powerful and more sagacious than himself. It was when Adam and Eve were living in peaceful obedience and submission to God's holy will, that the evil spirit approached to tempt them and to lead them away from the path of virtue. So little were they dreaming of any wrongdoing, at the time, that they began even by offering some slight resistance to the evil suggestions that the devil placed so attractively before them. But for his sinister influence, they would probably have preserved themselves in innocence to the end and have escaped all harm. It was only when the devil entered into conversation with them and began to stir up doubts and ambitions in their minds that they, little by little, showed some hesitation and gradually began to give way.

"Why," inquired the evil one, "do you not eat of the fruit of *every* tree in the garden?" Their answer shows a calm simple faith and a respectful reverence. "Because God has said that on the day we eat of the forbidden fruit we shall die the death." Had the tempter been called away, even at that stage of the conversation, perhaps but little harm would have resulted, but he went on to deceive them by lying words, and, with a feigned desire for their happiness, he assured them that they were quite mistaken and that no result such as they feared would overtake them, even though they should disregard the command that had been laid upon them. In fact, having aroused their curiosity and their ambition he went on to explain that so far from "dying the death" they would "become like unto God." At last they fell into the snare and yielded to the seduction.

Thus, though man sinned and sinned grievously against his sovereign Lord and Master, yet his sin was not the spontaneous act of his own individual will, but rather the result of weakness under the violent

and persistent assault of the devil. He yielded indeed, but not until the strong subtle mind of a superior being had exerted all its force and cunning against him and had lied and prevaricated and deceived by false though honeyed words and promises.

One who sins under such conditions cannot indeed be free from guilt, but surely he is far more deserving of pity and commiseration than one who commits evil deliberately and spontaneously, and with none to suggest it, or to urge him on, as was the case with the angels.

III. There is a third reason why man should be shown mercy rather than the angels, and that reason is to be found in the fact that, with the immense multitude of mankind, the sin which brought about their misery and condemnation was not a personal sin at all. It was the sin of their first parents. The descendants of Adam and Eve were indeed guilty, but their guilt was inherited. They received it from their father and mother. The guilt was not incurred by them personally. It was merely handed down to them. They were contaminated by reason of the polluted source from which they sprang. Without any conscious act or deliberate choice on their part, they found themselves the outlawed and cursed children of a rebel father, who had forfeited all his rights, and they merely reaped the fatal consequences of his crime. They were guilty because he was guilty. They were condemned, because they were bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and because the curse which he had brought upon himself affected his whole nature and extended to every child that should descend from his loins. Millions were to suffer the penalty of an offense for which personally and individually they were in no way responsible. Millions were condemned for the sin of one.

The angels were in quite another position. Though many millions committed sin it was not in any case an inherited sin. Every individual of that countless multitude of angelic beings who fell, possessed free will and

perfect liberty and was able to choose for himself. The angels are not bound to one another as every man is bound to every other man. One is not produced by another as with us, but each is a direct creation of God. An angel receives no part of his being from any other creature. He has neither father nor mother, nor a progenitor of any kind, but stands in splendid isolation, carrying within himself the whole responsibility of his acts. Each angel, no doubt, had to be tested before he was confirmed in grace. But no one was held responsible for another. Each had to use his own gifts to make his own choice and by his own personal decision to seal his own fate. Hence, each had himself alone to blame if swift punishment followed upon his crime.

From this fact it becomes abundantly clear that mankind who sinned in Adam and who have incurred his fate, without any fault of their own, are far more deserving of God's tender mercy than the ranks of the fallen angels. It is then scarcely to be wondered at that God in His loving kindness should extend His divine Hands and come to the rescue of poor sinful man, even though He abandoned the superior race of angelic beings to suffer the full punishment due to their pride and disobedience.

IV. In addition to the three chief reasons pointed out above, there is another reason of congruity which is also deserving of notice, and which, no doubt, weighed considerably in the divine counsels. In considering the two great creations of intelligent beings, *viz.*, the angels on the one hand and man on the other, God saw that Adam by his sin had overwhelmed the *whole* human race. Every one of his descendants [did not God intervene] would be defiled by original sin and suffer its consequences. Not one of the immense multitude destined to fill the earth, century after century and generation after generation, would escape the slime of the serpent. Not so much as one solitary representative of the human race could hope to find his way into Heaven or could ever stand in glory be-

fore the eternal throne of God. All, yes all, without exception would be swept, like rubbish, into the void did not God interfere to prevent it, and the black shadow of blank despair must have settled down over all for ever.

With the angels, the outlook was by no means so appalling. For in their case, though many fell, many stood firm: though a third part of the heavenly host yielded to the evil promptings of pride and ambition and failed in their allegiance, yet, it must not be forgotten that by far the larger number—in fact, two-thirds—remained steadfast and true and refused to follow their evil companions.

Hence, it seemed but right and fitting that man should be given some further chance of retrieving his fortune and escaping his deplorable fate. So, for this fourth reason also, God resolved to rescue man, while leaving the rebel angels to their fate.

Now God, if He acts at all, acts always in a manner worthy of God. Having resolved to come to the assistance of His unhappy children and to pay the price of their redemption, He determined to do so in the fullest and most generous manner possible, so that while He entirely satisfied the full claims of justice, He might at the same time exercise the greatest mercy and compassion.

Justice required two things which at first glance seemed wholly and utterly incompatible and which were actually impossible except to the omnipotence of God.

(*a*) In the first place, as it was man who sinned, so justice demanded that man should pay the penalty; as man had offended and broken the law of God and forfeited the friendship of his Maker, so it was necessary that man should make reparation and offer the requisite ransom.

(*b*) But, in the second place, the ransom he was required to make was an infinite one, for his sin (measured by the dignity and majesty of the Being against whom he had lifted his puny hand in rebellion) was

a sin of infinite malice. Nothing less than an infinite recompense could adequately satisfy for an infinite offense. Hence, we are at once met by an insuperable difficulty. For, if it is man who must pay, then the recompense cannot possibly be infinite, since man himself is but a finite creature and has nothing of infinite value to offer. God alone is infinite. He alone can offer an infinite satisfaction; but then, if God were to offer it, the satisfaction would not be made by man, and one of the essential conditions required by rigorous justice would be wanting. As one of the human race committed the crime, so, according to strict equity, one of that same race should offer compensation. Here we seem to have reached a complete impasse. We can discover no way of satisfying both these conditions, which are mutually exclusive. But, my Brethren, what was hopelessly and utterly impossible to man was possible to God. He resolved to become man Himself, to enter into the human family, to be born of an earthly mother and to share our nature and our life, so that He might reverse the curse pronounced upon Adam and his descendants. For, as in one man all sinned, so in one man all were to be set free from sin. As the poison in one man poisoned the blood that coursed from his veins into the veins of all his progeny, so the infinite virtue that dwelt in the Man-God, coursing from His veins into the veins of all humanity, restored it to health and spiritual vigor.

In other words, Jesus Christ, being at once both God and man, was in a position to satisfy all the conditions of the most rigorous justice. He was truly man, so He offered the compensation as one of the offending race, as a man for men. But since He was also God, the recompense which He offered was literally of infinite value. His sufferings and His death were the sufferings and the death of an infinite Being, yea, the sufferings and the death of God. But how, it may be objected, can God suffer or die? Are not suffering and death impossible to God? We must distinguish. Sufferings and death are impossible to God *in His*

divine nature, but God the Son, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, possessed two distinct natures since He took to Himself the nature of man, and in that created nature which He assumed He was able both to suffer and to die. And these sufferings and this death we rightly ascribe to God, because there is no human person, no created person, no finite person in Jesus Christ, but only a divine and infinite Person, and that is the person of God the Son. It was the divine Person that was nailed to the Cross and that died in agony upon it, for in Jesus Christ there is but one Person and that is the Person of God the Son.

Through His stripes we are healed, through His death we pass into supernatural life, and in His glorious resurrection from the tomb, and triumphant entry into Heaven, we have a figure and a promise of our own final triumph over death and the grave which He has secured for us by His infinite merits and satisfactions. Therefor I say, "Rejoice and again I say rejoice."

How, my dear brethren, can we sufficiently thank Him for His infinite goodness, generosity and love? How can we show, as we ought, our appreciation and gratitude? The least we can do is to avail ourselves to the utmost of the opportunities that He has placed within our reach and to cooperate with the innumerable graces He has purchased for us at so great a price.

Surely the apathy and carelessness of so many Christians should fill us with sorrow and astonishment and warn us off the path that they are following. Though Christ did not hesitate to suffer and die for them, they will do little or nothing for themselves. Though He so valued their souls that He was ready to pay an infinite price to rescue them from hell and damnation, they will hardly move one little finger or deny themselves any pleasure or satisfaction, however sinful, in order to render His efforts fruitful and efficacious in their souls.

Let us, at least, be better advised, and resolve before it is too late to renounce sin at any cost and so to

live that we may merit the blessed approval of Jesus Christ in this life and an eternal recompense in the next.

Life is short and uncertain. The years are hastening by and the end cannot be far off. If we look into our own lives we shall find that there are many faults to correct, many bad habits to overcome and many sins and offenses to atone for, before we are in a fit state to appear before the supreme Judge. If it be "an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" at any time and to have to render to Him a full account of every act, thought, word and omission, it will be a yet more "awful thing" if we have abused His tenderest mercies and trodden under foot His Precious Blood, and have failed to profit by His most painful and agonizing death upon the Cross. "To whom much has been given, much shall be required," is the warning of the Apostle.

If such be the principle of divine action, who will describe the rigor of the account to be rendered by us who have received such undreamed-of and such immeasurable favors from God the Son, in His incarnation, passion and final immolation. To call to mind the favors received, and the obligations under which we are of praise and thanksgiving, is the first condition of fulfilling them. We should therefore frequently keep before our minds, at this season of Advent, the great mystery of the Incarnation and all that this mystery means to us, both in time and in eternity.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

On Penance

Text:—"He came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance, for the remission of sins."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

THERE are few things more distasteful to the natural man than penance. His whole nature craves for pleasure, comfort, ease and the full gratification of all his senses; and the very thought of self-denial and of mortification is bitter and disagreeable to him. Nor is this greatly to be wondered at, for man was created by an all-loving Creator for happiness. He was destined to lead a life of contentment and of joy, and what is more, this destiny would have been fully realized had he only listened to the voice of his Maker and abstained from sin.

But alas! "When man was in honor, he did not understand, but became like the senseless beasts." (Psalm xlviii. 13.) That is to say, he failed to recognize God's claims, and, in pursuance of his own private ends, cast aside his allegiance and rebelled against the Eternal and the Omnipotent, with most fatal results.

That one awful act of gross and deliberate disobedience wrecked his whole career, and vitiated his whole nature. The pleasures and delights, the innocent joys and the peace and prosperity, that formed, as it were, the very atmosphere of his state of innocence are now no longer suitable to his altered state, for just as in the natural order one can not treat a *sick* man in the same manner as one treats a *healthy* man, so is it also in the supernatural order.

An indulgent father will do all he can to please and gratify his own son, so long as the boy remains healthy and strong. He will procure for him all the pleasure and innocent amusement in his power, and strive to make his life a round of joy. But note the change that

comes over even the most loving parent, when, by some imprudence, the son has ruined his health or dislocated or fractured a limb. Let us suppose that such a son, in utter disregard of his father's repeated warnings and threats, had climbed along the rotten branch of a tree, and that the branch had broken, and that he had fallen, dislocating his shoulder or causing a compound fracture. What then? Even though the father might forgive his repentant son the disobedience and the disregard of his authority, he can no longer treat him as he treated him before. His affection might remain. He might love him still, but his very love would oblige him to alter his treatment. The son had disregarded his father's authority. He had violated his commands. He had brought pain and disaster on himself. And now the father's one wish and aim is to restore him once again to health. But this can be brought about only through much misery and pain. His wounds must be dressed. His limbs must be put in splints. He must lie week after week inactive and on a bed of agony. Many a trying operation and many a painful incision may be necessary. Yet, though this is a very different treatment to that which the boy had been accustomed, it is dictated by the same love. One can not deal with the sick as with the healthy, either in the natural or in the supernatural order.

Now, man to-day is spiritually sick. He has fallen wounded and bleeding, pierced by the shaft of his pitiless enemy, the devil. His state calls for severe and painful remedies. No longer may he indulge his inclinations to the full, and swim in a sea of pleasure. Quite the contrary, his desperate condition requires that he should restrain his inclinations, curb his will, and put a bridle upon all his rebellious appetites. The remedy, powerful and efficacious, that he now needs is the Cross. Hence the Divine Master cries out to all of us without exception to embrace it. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Matt. xv. 24.) Indeed, St. Alphonsus truly observes, "Christian per-

fection consists in self-abnegation, and to such an extent that whosoever denies not himself is not and cannot be a true follower of Christ."

Penance is a dire necessity for several reasons. Firstly, that we may thereby atone for our many past sins and transgressions, for none of us are free from blame. "If," we are reminded in the inspired words of St. John, "we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John i. 8.)

Penance is necessary, in the second place, that we may thereby dispose God "to look down upon us with a propitious and serene countenance" (Psalm), and to forgive us our many crimes and infidelities. "Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities," says Ezechiel (xviii. 30), "and then iniquity shall not be your ruin."

Penance is necessary, in the third place, that we may strengthen ourselves to resist the deceits and temptations of the devil in the future, and acquire a greater mastery over our wayward and vacillating will, which is ever ready to betray us into the hands of our enemies. A little consideration will soon convince us of this. For what really is penance? It is the denying ourselves in things which are in themselves lawful; and it is precisely by denying ourselves in lawful things that we acquire the power of denying ourselves in things which are sinful and unlawful. Man is a creature of habit. If he accustoms himself to do his own will in all things lawful, and to yield to every innocent inclination, he gradually develops a habit, which strengthens more and more every day with use. Then sooner or later he finds himself confronted with some desire, which it is sinful to indulge. Some unlawful pleasure, some forbidden gratification is set temptingly before him. His whole heart is drawn and set on fire, and he longs to taste the forbidden nectar. Will he resist, or will he yield? Will he loyally dash the cup of pleasure from his lips, or will he basely drink the delicious poison? The answer depends, in great measure, upon the habits he has already formed.

If he has led a life of penance, that is to say, if he has been accustomed to deny himself even in things that are lawful, he will easily be able to deny himself in those which are unlawful, and so will preserve his soul unsullied. But if, on the contrary, he has never learned to deny himself and to hold his passions and inclinations in check by the daily practice of mortification, he will find it extremely difficult all at once to begin to curb and master his undisciplined will when some special attraction or some exceptional delight is luring him on.

It is with the spiritual fight as it is with the physical fight. A soldier must be trained long before he actually enters the battlefield. He can not afford to wait till the enemy is upon him. Knowing the day of battle will come sooner or later, he prepares himself beforehand for the conflict. He marches and drills and practices with sword and musket, and goes carefully and repeatedly through all kinds of warlike maneuvers, long before he expects to meet the foe. In that way he fits himself to do battle successfully, whensoever he may be called upon.

We, too, my dear brethren, are soldiers fighting under the leadership of Jesus Christ, and if we are to be successful against the devil, the world and the flesh, we must keep our will in perfect control, and acquire by practise such a complete mastery over it that no stratagem and no cunning of the enemy may ever seduce it from its sworn loyalty to God and to conscience.

The saints of God's Church differ from one another in a thousand ways, but in one thing they all agree, and that is in their love and appreciation of the Cross. They led mortified lives, they denied themselves the most innocent pleasures, they renounced their inclinations, and gladly delivered themselves over to the most severe penance. In this way they so strengthened and steeled their wills that no power on earth could turn them from God or lead them into sin. And if we, dear brethren, are to remain steadfast and loyal,

it is essential that we too should, at least to some extent, embrace a life of penance and self-restraint; for, "unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 3.) One of the greatest masters of the spiritual life is St. John of the Cross, and he is most emphatic on this point. Listen to his weighty words: "The way of God," he writes, "consisteth not in the multiplicity of meditations, ways of devotion, or sweetness, though these may be necessary for beginners, but in one essential thing only, *viz.,* in knowing how to deny ourselves in earnest both inwardly and outwardly, and in giving ourselves up to suffer for Christ's sake, and in annihilating ourselves utterly." "If," he continues, "we be deficient at all in this exercise, which is the *sum and root of all virtue,* all else we may do will be but beating the air—utterly profitless, notwithstanding great meditations and communications. That form of spirituality which would travel in sweetness and at its ease, *shunning the imitation of Christ,* is nothing worth." (Vol. I, p. 78.)

In to-day's Gospel, which we have just read to you, we find the great St. John the Baptist urging his followers and disciples to the practice of penance. The inspired writer tells us that "he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the BAPTISM of penance for the remission of sins." Here you will observe, my dear brethren, that the Evangelist speaks of penance as a "baptism," and what is still more significant, as a baptism "for the remission of sins."

As some of you are no doubt aware, the word "baptism" is taken from the Greek word "baptizo," signifying "to dip into water," hence to cleanse or wash. And this term is applied to penance, in as much as earnest and persevering and systematic penance accompanied by true sorrow, does actually cleanse and purify the soul from the defilement of sin, as by a second and painful baptism. This effect is produced by virtue of our intimate union with Jesus Christ, by grace. For though our personal sufferings and mortifications, our fasts and our vigils

possess no supernatural intrinsic merit *of themselves*, yet they become both useful and meritorious through the passion and death of the Eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, to whom we have all become united, as it were, in one indivisible body, according to the teaching of St. Paul, when he writes to the Corinthians: "Ye are the Body of Christ, and severally members thereof." (Ch. xii.) And again: "As the body is one, though it hath many members, and as all the members of the body, being many, are *one* body, so also is Christ." (1 Cor. xii. 12.)

Those outside the one true fold of Christ are often inclined to disapprove and even to blame the Catholic Church for her teaching upon this subject. They insist that Christ has satisfied and more than satisfied for the sins of the world, and that therefore once our sins are forgiven, we need trouble ourselves no more about the punishment they deserve. This is indeed an easy and a pleasant doctrine, and one which will be highly approved of by the sensual and pleasure-loving world, but it is a doctrine impossible to reconcile with the most emphatic teaching of our blessed Lord. We all admit the perfect efficacy of the Divine atonement. We are fully aware that Jesus Christ's sufferings and death were of infinite value, and sufficient to satisfy, not only for the sins of this world, but likewise for the sins of ten thousand worlds, did they exist; but we can not allow for one moment the conclusion that some Protestants draw from this fact. We can not allow that we are thereby freed from the necessity of personal and individual penance. In the case of those, for instance, who have fallen into grievous sin after baptism, when the guilt of such sin and the everlasting punishment due to it are forgiven through the merits of Christ in the Sacrament of Penance, there still very often remains a debt of temporal punishment to be paid by the culprit. This debt remains, be it observed, not in the least from any want of efficacy in the atonement of Christ, which is beyond all value, but because it is God's will that by

voluntary self-chastisement we should supply for the imperfection of our repentance and for the weakness of our sorrow.* Further, the salutary fear of temporal punishment helps to strengthen our resolutions of amendment, checks us from falling again so readily into sin, and enables us to make some reparation for the bad example and the scandal we have given.

From this it is clear that whilst our Saviour, by atoning for our sins, has done what we could never have done for ourselves, He has by no means dispensed us from doing, with the help of His grace, what we can to punish ourselves for the offences and outrages we have offered to God. And common sense assures us that this is right and just. Our first parents had the guilt of their crime forgiven. Yet, this notwithstanding, they were compelled to undergo a long course of bitter temporal chastisement. The same may be said of Aaron, of Moses, of his sister Miriam, and of the whole people of Israel in the desert, as we are expressly told in the holy Bible. We may also read there of King David's sin, and of the consequences that followed upon it. When called to task, he expressed his sorrow. He sincerely repented and openly acknowledged his offence, crying out to the prophet Nathan: "I have sinned! I have sinned!" And because of his true contrition his sin was pardoned. But he still had to endure temporal suffering, in expiation of his crime. This is set before us, for our instruction, by the prophet himself, who addressed King David in the following words: "The Lord hath indeed taken away thy sin; thou shalt not die, nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing the child that is born of thee shall assuredly die." (2 Kings xii.) From this it is clear that he was punished for his transgression, even after the guilt had been forgiven, by the loss of his cherished and well-beloved son. Furthermore,

* *Note:*—In fact, contrition may be so *perfect* and so *intense* as to remit not only the sin but the punishment due to sin. P. C. Marc, Vol. II, § 1674, teaches:—"Contritio potest eo usque increscere, ut plenam culpae *et poenae* deletionem sufficiat, ut patet ex exemplo boni Latronis."

David says of himself: "I have labored in my groanings, every night I wash my bed and water my couch with my tears" (Ps. vi. 7), fully realizing that atonement has still to be made, even after the offence itself has been pardoned and washed away, and the culprit restored to favor.

Yet, in spite of the need of penance, it still remains repugnant and hateful (as I have already remarked) to the natural man. How, then, are we to fight against and to overcome this repugnance? What is there that will reconcile us to "take up our cross daily" and to follow our crucified Lord? In the history of the saints, who are our great models, what is it that always proved the greatest incentives to penance? There are many, and we can not do better at the end of our discourse than point them out.

(1) In the first place there is the strong personal love of God. One who truly loves finds a positive delight in suffering and in denying himself for the sake of the beloved. As St. Augustine reminds us: "He who loves thinks nothing hard; whereas the least labor or affliction is insupportable to him who loves not."

(2) A second incentive is the marvellous example set us by Jesus Christ, whose whole life was a continuous martyrdom. "Christ suffered for us," declares the prince of Apostles, "leaving us an example, that *we should follow in His footsteps.*" (1 Peter ii. 21.)

The contemplation of our Lord and Leader, passing His life in self-chosen poverty, want, hardship and privations of every kind even from His earliest infancy, is well calculated to stir the hearts of His true friends and followers to emulate His heroic example. It but ill becomes the disciples of such a master to be soft, effeminate and self-indulgent; and they will willingly and cheerfully model their own lives upon His.

(3) A third incentive is the recollection and sorrowful consciousness of our many personal sins and imperfections, by which we have offended God, and which

are all the fruit and the outcome of our unmortified passions and of our excessive and disordinate self-love. These deeds of darkness call for expiation, and must be atoned for, either here or hereafter. "Amen, I say unto thee; thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing." (Matt. v. 26.) We shall do well to pay the price here, in the present life.

(4) A fourth incentive is the consideration of the enormous spiritual value of even the least act of self-denial performed from a supernatural motive, each act of which secures for the doer (a) an increase of actual grace here and now, together with a claim to (b) a corresponding increase of eternal glory in heaven.

(5) A fifth incentive is the recognition of the enormous purchasing power of suffering. "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.) So that St. Paul assures the Romans that he reckons that "the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come." (Rom. viii. 18.) "If," writes St. John of the Cross, "you will deny yourself one joy, in the things of sense, our Lord will repay you a hundredfold in this life spiritually and temporarily."

(6) The last incentive I shall mention is the conviction that the way of mortification is the path that leads directly to our heavenly Father's home. "Through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God." (Acts xiv. 21.)

Let us take these considerations to heart. The time is short. The years are hastening by and the end can not be far off. Let us then begin before it is too late to prepare for the coming of the great Judge of the living and the dead, who will soon pass an irrevocable sentence upon us. Harken to the voice of St. John, urging us to penance. Let it fall on attentive ears and stir our sluggish hearts to action and not be as a voice "crying in the wilderness," and spending itself in vain and fruitless efforts. Then,

so far from fearing the advent of the supreme Judge, we shall but rejoice to welcome Him, "who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of hearts." To Him be honor and praise and glory forever. Amen.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

The Mutability of All Things

Text:—"That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." —(*From the Epistle of the day.*)

EVERYTHING here below has an end. Nothing endures for long. Joy soon gives place to sorrow, laughter soon dissolves into tears and pleasure changes into pain. Our states of body and of mind are constantly changing. Like bubbles, they rise on the turgid stream of this life, to burst and disappear almost as soon as formed. The longest earthly career consists of only a few years, which are soon run through, and then the little hero, strutting on the stage of this world, passes into that silent land from which no traveler returns.

To-day is the very last day of the year nineteen hundred and ..... It registers the close of another term of our earthly existence and carries us yet a step nearer the dread judgment seat of God, where a strict account will have to be rendered of every thought, of every word, of every deed, and even of every omission.

The thought may well steady us, and set us inquiring as to whether we are now living in such a manner as to make so searching a scrutiny agreeable. What has been our progress in virtue, we shall do well to ask, during the past twelve months? How far have we attempted to correct our faults and failings, and to atone for our past transgressions; and what successes have we to note? What efforts have we made to overcome our unruly inclinations and to subdue our rebellious passions? A year ago we were full of good resolutions, and of earnest hopes and projects for the coming year. How have these

resolutions been carried out? What additional earnestness and generosity in the service of God have we shown, and what improvement can we point to as proof of our zeal and sincerity?

The current year is now at its close, and if we have changed but little, and if we have nothing we can appeal to, in proof of our sincere desire to "redeem the time," then we may well feel uneasy, and begin to ask ourselves *when, if ever,* we are really going to take a step in advance. Is every year, as it rolls by, to find us in the same lukewarm and indifferent state? Are we never going to arouse ourselves, and to shake ourselves free from our lethargy? Unless we bestir ourselves without further delay, and awaken to our responsibility, the chances are that death will surprise us and find us just as worldly and just as imperfect as ever, and all the precious years that God so generously bestows upon us, for the express purpose of advancing in virtue, will have been bestowed in vain!

Still, though this thought should sober us and make us fearful, it should not drive us to despair. If we have failed to employ our time as profitably as we ought in the past our chances are not yet entirely gone. All is not lost. We may still make a start, even though it be at the eleventh hour. Let us then dedicate, at all events, all that remains of life to the service of our Maker.

If we have at last learned prudence and wisdom, then we shall so act that the first day of January may register for us, not only a new year, but also the beginning of a new life: a life of greater holiness, of deeper recollection, and of closer union with God. Such a forward movement will not prove so difficult as it might at first appear, if we will only take the trouble to consider the strong motives urging us to strive and struggle for the better things, and if only we are determined to look, as St. Paul says, "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (2 Cor. iv. 18.)

Why is it that men are, for the most part, so indifferent, so listless and apathetic, concerning their most vital interests? Why? Because they make no attempt to get below the surface of things, and to realize their responsibility, and because they will not give themselves leisure to weigh and measure the remote and eternal consequences attaching to conduct. They simply will not take the trouble to reflect. And in this respect, perhaps you, my brothers, now seated before me, may not be much wiser than others. About earthly things we are indeed solicitous. But are we solicitous about the "one thing necessary"? Do we even allow ourselves the necessary leisure to consider whence we have come, and whither we are going, and how we shall fare when we are summoned to give an account of our stewardship? Do we bear in mind that we are on a journey, and that, at any moment, we may reach that journey's end? Are we deeply anxious about the issues of life, and about the tremendous consequences that are bound up with it? Are we vividly sensible of the fact that every hour, yea, every moment, of our conscious life counts either for or against us? Have we, in a word, learned in a practical manner that time—yes, my brethren, time which we so readily squander, time which we misspend and flitter idly away—is the very seed of eternity: and that, "As a man sows now, so shall he reap then"?

Until we bring ourselves to master the situation, at least to some extent, we shall never make any rapid progress, nor shall we ever come to dedicate our entire heart and soul to God, as we are commanded to in Holy Writ, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy *whole* heart," etc.

The short time at our disposal renders it impossible for us to draw out the many considerations calculated to affect our minds and to excite our wills to action. We will, however, select one out of the many, and that is the consideration of eternity.

That we are MADE FOR ETERNITY is a trite and famil-

iar saying. This truth has been put before us again and again. Indeed, we have been told it so often that we are apt to imagine that we understand what is meant. But in this, as in so much else, we wholly deceive ourselves. As a matter of fact we have no proper grasp even of time; and if our grasp of time is so inadequate, how immeasurably more inadequate must be our grasp of eternity. It may be worth our while to consider this point somewhat more closely. Now, if we examine the working of our own mind and the limited range of our faculties we shall find that while we may form a more or less accurate idea of short periods of time we can do nothing more. Thus, we may imagine to ourselves a century, or ten centuries, possibly even a larger number, but so soon as ever our mind is confronted by really vast periods of time, it gets utterly confused and incapable of forming any intelligible image of the duration which our words express.

Dismissing then, for the moment, all thought of eternity as being hopelessly beyond us, let us essay a humbler task, and try our powers upon the simpler question of time. Let us see how far we can grapple with the following problem, which has to do with a duration which is strictly limited.

Kindly give me your attention while I endeavor to set it before you in as simple a manner as possible. We will commence by taking a simple unit, say for example, a year. Let us write down "1." That represents the term of one year. So far, so good. Now, as we all know, the numeral 1 is raised to ten times its value by the simple addition of a naught, so that 1, with the added naught, becomes 10. If we now add a second naught, that will have the effect of multiplying the last number again by ten, so that it becomes 100 (*i. e.*, 10x10). The addition of a third naught will, in a similar way, multiply the 100 by ten, bringing it up to 1000 (*i. e.*, 100x10). A naught added to one thousand will similarly raise it to 10,000. And thus we may continue, again and again, for as long

as we please, adding naught after naught to any given sum: and every single naught so added will have the effect of raising the last total to ten times its previous value.

Now, keeping this very elementary mathematical truth well before us, let us wander down to the seashore, when the tide is out, and contemplate the unnumbered sands. Look to right and to left. See! As far as the eye can reach, stretches out the silvery line of sand. Mile after mile it extends, all along the coast of our great country. Now let each tiny grain of sand represent a naught. Having placed our unit "1," we put one grain of sand beside it, and then another, and then another, and another, and yet another, until we have used up all the sands on all the seashores. What period of time would that figure represent? Ten grains, representing ten naughts, would stand for ten thousand million years; *i. e.*, 10,000,000,000. Twenty grains, representing twenty naughts, would raise the number to 100,000,000,000,000,000,000 years. Which of you, my dear brethren, can realize a duration such as that? Few of you can even read such a figure, and probably none of you can at all estimate its true value. Yet we are at the very outset of our calculations. We have used up but twenty grains: less than we might pick up by pressing a moistened finger-tip against the sand. If but twenty grains represent a period so wholly and utterly unthinkable, what period would be represented by a shovelful of sand disposed and arranged according to a similar plan? And what period would be represented by a cartload? Here we are already out of our depth, and utterly at sea. Yet what, after all, is one cartload compared to the masses of sand, stretching for hundreds and thousands of miles along countless shores, all the world over? When all these grains, each of which represents a naught, are added one by one to the original figure, then pound the rocks into powder and break up the vast mountain ranges, and having reduced the whole to the consistency of sand,

add these grains also to the existing figure, and try to imagine what the sum will be and the duration it represents.

While no man can reckon up the total, nor express the sum in human language, yet every man will see and understand that the sum (however vast and unthinkable) is most undoubtedly a limited one, and consequently a sum in no way expressive of eternity. The period so represented is not one-half, nor one-tenth, nor one-hundredth, nor one-millionth part of eternity. It is no fraction whatever of eternity. In fact, when the last grain registering these countless years has been used up, eternity will still be but beginning, still be but just opening. For, though inconceivably remote, yet a time *must* at last be reached, when the period represented by the grains of sand, taken as naughts, would come to an end; but to eternity no end can ever come, since it is without end.

We will call this unthinkable yet limited duration X. Now let me ask: if the present life were not related to eternity at all, but only to this limited period X, would it not be to our interest, even then, so to spend the passing term of our earthly existence as to secure happiness during that period? Should we not deem him a veritable fool who for the sake of fifty or sixty years of dissipation and selfish pleasure should be willing to jeopardize such a future of delights?

What is the longest life on earth; what is eighty or even ninety years compared to the period we have agreed to call X? Nothing! Even though a man should prolong his earthly career to the uttermost, and pass a hundred years in complete possession of his faculties, and in perfect health, and amid the greatest enjoyments, what is it but the merest instant compared to the period X? But if a hundred years be but an instant, when compared to X, X itself is but an instant (or rather infinitely less than an instant) when compared to eternity. And it is for eternity we are created; it is for eternity and not for time, however long, even though it be a period equal

to X, that we are acting and laboring all the day long —yes; an eternity of happiness or an eternity of misery.

Can that solemn thought leave us unmoved? Is it possible to ponder over it seriously and still to remain indifferent? Is it possible to play the fool and to risk our eternal salvation for a passing whim or a transitory pleasure, while this great fact holds us in its grasp?

Oh! the children of this world are indeed wiser in their generation than the children of light. Any worldling would gladly labor for the space of one day could he thereby secure for himself fifty years of earthly enjoyment. Indeed it would require no eloquence to persuade him to deny himself and to forego his pleasure during four and twenty hours if he could thereby purchase immunity from all pain and sorrow for the rest of his natural life. But with immeasurably greater reason should he be ready to deny himself, during fifty years, in order to secure an *X period* of happiness, and with infinitely greater reason still, in order to secure an *eternity* of happiness, since eternity is infinitely longer than the period X, or any other finite period that might be suggested.

This would be true, even were this happiness such a happiness as we are acquainted with: *i. e.*, a happiness arising from bodily health and worldly honors and possessions, and a mind at ease; but, as a matter of fact, the eternal happiness that God has promised to those who observe His laws and keep His word is unspeakably greater than any happiness with which we are acquainted. It is so measureless, not only in duration, but also in intensity, that no true idea of it has ever or can ever enter into the human mind. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for those that love Him."

That this is so is undoubted, and may be proved by reason as well as by faith. To prove this, it is enough

to compare the sources of all earthly happiness with the source from which heavenly happiness springs.

What is it that renders men happy and contented in this world? It may be health, riches, friends, honors, sensual delights and intellectual pleasures, choice food and drink, and the like. Some may place happiness in one thing, some in another; but whatever we may take to be its cause, we must in every case admit that it is ALWAYS something created, something finite. Picture to yourselves the happiest mortal that ever existed; surround him with ever joy and pleasure and amusement; give him nobility of form, and strength of limb, a Solomon's intellect, and an Absolom's beauty. Draw the picture in the most glowing colors. When you have exhausted every effort, and produced the most supremely happy individual possible, you must still confess that all these sources of happiness, however numerous and however varied, are, after all, *created* sources, and therefore essentially and by their very nature finite and limited and imperfect.

How wholy different is the happiness of Heaven. That, and that alone, springs from a source which is at once uncreated, eternal and infinite. Yes. For its source is no other than God, and God, in Himself, is a source of infinitely greater ecstacy and delight than any creature is or can be, or than can be all creatures put together.

Even in Heaven WE can not, of course, enjoy an absolutely infinite happiness, because we ourselves are finite, and our capacity is necessarily limited. But absolute happiness is really in God, and if we could possess Him in all His fulness, as He possesses Himself, our happiness would be literally infinite also. Since, however, we are limited beings we can possess and enjoy Him only according to the measure of our capacity—but this capacity, by God's goodness, if not vast enough to hold God, the Infinite, is nevertheless far too vast for creatures ever to fill or satisfy. As St. Augustine says: "The heart of man was made for

God, and," he adds, "it can never rest, until it rest in Him alone."

From these considerations it may easily be inferred that the supernatural happiness that may be ours, if only we spend the brief moment of life well, is immeasurable both in duration and in intensity; for if, on the one hand, it is everlasting and without end, so, on the other hand, it is also of a nature and quality infinitely above anything of which we have any experience.

Are we then such arrant fools as to be indifferent about it? Do we attach so little importance to its possession that we will do little or nothing to secure it?

Consider the kind of lives that most men lead. Do they evince the slightest interest in this tremendous subject? No! Few trouble themselves at all about it. Or, turn your eyes inward, and consider your own conduct. Will the examination satisfy you? Will it tend to assure you, that you, Catholics though you be, are fully alive to your responsibility?

Oh! open the eyes of your soul and contemplate this awful problem. Weigh well what is at stake. Let not another year begin without forming a generous resolution to spend it in God's service, and in fitting yourselves more and more for a place in His heavenly kingdom. Ponder again and again over the inspired words I have taken for my text: "That which is at present MOMENTARY and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an ETERNAL weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE CIRCUMCISION

The Adoration of the Magi

Text:—"When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him."—(*From the Gospel of the Epiphany.*)

WITHIN the coming week we shall celebrate the feast of the Epiphany. Now, the word Epiphany comes to us from the Greek and signifies "an appearance," or "a manifestation." This name is given to the Feast, because it is a Feast in which we commemorate the manifestation of the incarnate Son of God to the Wise Men, or Magi, some months, or perhaps it might be about a year, after His nativity. For it seems most in accordance with the teaching of Holy Scripture (Luke ii. 39; Matt. ii. 16 and 22) to assume that these kings from the East did not arrive until our Lord's return from Nazareth, whither He was taken after His Presentation in the Temple.

The long journey of these brave men across the wild and inhospitable country with their dromedaries and servants and gifts forms one of the most striking incidents in the life of our Lord. It is not certain whether they came from Persia, Chaldaea or Arabia, but all commentators agree that it was from a country situated towards the East. These kings were possessors of the religious and philosophical knowledge of their time; they were students of natural philosophy and astronomy, and by their frequent contact with the people of Israel they had grown familiar with many of the prophecies contained in the sacred books, and had no doubt become acquainted with Baalam's prophecy of the star of Jacob, referred to in the book of Numbers xxiv. 17; Dan. ii. 47, and elsewhere. In

addition to this, it is thought probable that they received a special revelation with instructions to go and pay homage to the God-King so soon as they should see this star appear. That a star of some kind did actually arise is perfectly certain; but whether it was an already existing star, now breaking into view for the first time, or whether it was a newly created one, or a comet, or some other unusual atmospheric phenomenon, we have no means of forming an opinion.

As God summoned the shepherds to His humble crib by the voice of His holy angels, so He called the Kings by means of a mysterious star. As they were given to the study of natural phenomena it seems appropriate that they should be invited by a natural sign. It was also most becoming that Christ, who is the "Light of the World," should have chosen a light with which to conduct them to His humble shelter. And what was the object that these worthy men set before themselves when they started out on their long and perilous journey? It was not to enter the sumptuous palace of any rich and powerful monarch, where they might expect to be housed and entertained right royally, as befitted their rank and station; it was not to share in some jubilee or festivity or banquet or royal marriage prepared by some mighty sovereign like Baltassar, where the choicest viands were served up, and where the most precious wines were drunk out of goblets of solid gold. No! It was to seek a poor weak Child, just born of a humble and unknown mother, lying neglected and despised by the great world in a rude open stable, exposed to wind and rain and the inclemency of the weather.

It is a strange and unusual experience to behold the great ones of the earth groping about the comfortless hovels and cabins of the poor in search of a new born infant and, stooping down reverently, to lay their most priceless treasures at His feet.

Yet, here, we behold kings travelling great distances and enduring fatigues and inconveniences in order that they might prostrate themselves before a

tiny Child and offer Him not merely the most precious gifts which their kingdoms contained, but what is of far greater value in the sight of God, the homage and love and adoration of their own hearts. How shall we explain so great a prodigy? What is it that has kindled within them so irresistible a fervor? What has imparted to them the courage and the determination to surmount the difficulties of the way, the inclemency of the season, and all the privations and inconveniences necessarily associated with such an expedition? What is the all-powerful magnet attracting them? What is that secret, yet almost irresistible force, now drawing them onward in the direction of the star?

Shall we find any explanation in the poor, desolate stable, or in the straw-covered manger? No. We may indeed gaze around, but SO FAR AS THE MATERIAL EYE IS CONCERNED we can discover nothing to inspire them, nothing to strike their imaginations, or to raise their hopes.* We see nothing but a dimly lighted stable. An ox and an ass are quietly feeding; the floor is uneven and littered with straw, and the bleak winds sweep unhindered through the doorless entrance. The only other occupants are an aged man of venerable aspect, a youthful mother, and an Infant resting on a little straw. Surely! this is no suitable place for the rich and the great and the prosperous to be wending their way to, on a bitterly cold night of winter! Surely there is nothing to induce those who have luxurious homes and comfortable dwellings to quit them in order to seek this desolate spot? No indeed! And so thought the thousands then living in and around Bethlehem. And so argued the many multitudes feasting and carousing in the

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* *Note:*—It seems quite uncertain whether the divine infant was still in the stable, when the Magi reached Him, with their gifts. If we accept the opinion that a year or more had elapsed since His birth, we may be quite sure that St. Joseph would have found Him more suitable quarters, by the time the Wise-men came from the East. Still, even then, His home would have been poor enough and uncomfortable enough to suit the words of the text, without any considerable alteration.—J. S. V.

city of Jerusalem itself. And in a like spirit men always have argued and always will argue, so long as they allow themselves to be directed merely by their senses, and to be guided only by outward appearances. The natural man discerneth not the things of God, and has no appreciation for the supernatural and the divine.

In order to discriminate the precious from the vile, and to behold that which no corporal eye can reach, we must possess that great gift of the Holy Ghost, *viz.*, WISDOM. The three kings from the East possessed it. We are particularly informed that they were WISE men. And by reason of that supernatural light which is capable of "enlightening every man that cometh into this world" (John i. 9), and which most certainly enlightened them, they did not allow themselves to be deceived or misled by the scene that met their gaze as they reached the end of their journey.

The Cave was indeed a cave, and nothing more; yet they knew that all Heaven was gathered there. The central object, which beyond all else attracted their attention, was, to all appearance, nothing more than a puny newly born Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and reclining in a manger. But being illuminated by divine grace, they knew that that Infant was no other than the Infinite and Eternal God, the Irresistible Creator of all things visible and invisible, who spoke, and things were made; who commanded, and things were created, in short, as the Church says: "*Per quem omnia facta sunt.*"

Yes, my brethren, they gazed with awe and reverence upon that sleeping form, for they were well aware that though His corporal eyes might be closed, that yet the eyes of His divinity "neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm cxx. 4), but keep watch over all that exists and read the secrets of all hearts. The delicate hands, so wondrously fashioned, and which seem scarcely able to stretch themselves out in blessing toward the bowed heads of the kneeling kings, are, they know, the hands of God the Omnipotent; hands, there-

fore, that bear up the whole fabric of the universe that guide the constellations in their courses through the sky, and that sustain the measureless creation and prevent it from sinking into nothingness.

It is their faith therefore, their spiritual knowledge, which refuses to be ruled and tyrannized over by mere sense and outward appearance that accounts for their attitude of humility, gratitude, joy, adoration and love. This is why—kings though they be—they prostrate in the dust before the manger and humbly worship and adore the Infant lying within it, on His bed of straw.

The Holy Scripture goes on to narrate that the Wise Men brought with them from their respective kingdoms certain valuable gifts and laid them at the feet of the incarnate Saviour. Now these gifts were Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. Each of these gifts possesses a symbolical meaning and was presented in testimony of the Faith of the royal givers. Gold symbolized the kingly dignity, and was rightly offered to Christ as to a royal personage. It expressed the faith of the Wise Men in the spiritual sovereignty of the newly born Child. Hence their inquiry: "Where is He that is born, KING of the Jews." (Matt. ii. 2.) Frankincense symbolized the divine nature. It was offered in the most solemn occasions to Almighty God, especially in times of prayer, hence the words of holy David: "Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight" (Psalm cxl. 2), that is to say, "in the sight of God." So, too, in the Apocalypse (Ch. viii. 3) we read of how an angel "with a golden censer stood before the golden altar, which is before the throne of GOD, and how the smoke of the incense, which is the prayer of the saints, ascended up before GOD from the hand of the angel." By offering Frankincense the Wise Men made manifest their belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ the Son of the Virgin Mary. To these two gifts was added Myrrh, which was offered to Christ as the Redeemer. The bitterness of His Passion, and the anguish of His death

upon the Cross for our salvation were typified by the bitter and caustic taste of the Myrrh. In presenting this gift the three kings signified their belief in Christ as the long promised Saviour of mankind and the voluntary Victim to be immolated in expiation of the sins of the whole world.

The three gifts bear also another signification. To the Gold and the Frankincense and the Myrrh, which are gifts in the material order, there are three corresponding gifts existing in the spiritual order, which every Christian should offer to God.

Gold symbolizes charity; and rightly, for just as gold is the most precious of all metals, so charity is the most precious of all virtues. It is so precious indeed that no other virtue can avail us anything unless it be informed and accompanied by charity. "If," says St. Paul, "I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me NOTHING." (1 Cor. xiii.) It is for this charity that God asks when He says: "Son, give Me thy heart." And, dear brethren, if God has a right to the homage of our hearts at all times, surely He could never claim it with greater reason than when He came down to earth in order to redeem us with untold pain and agony. God has created us and bestowed upon us not only life, but all that makes life worth living. And that of itself is enough to give Him an absolute right to our gratitude and to our service. But such great and glorious gifts cost Him nothing to bestow. He merely spoke and we were made so that our entrance into being entailed on Him neither effort nor pain, whether of body or of mind. But the story of our redemption is a very different one. To rescue us from the power of the devil and from the jaws of hell, in the full and ample way in which He resolved to accomplish it, meant long years of bitter anguish, sorrow, humiliation and affliction, ending at last in the

dolorous way of the Cross and a most excruciating and ignominious death between two thieves. Consequently, while we may well rejoice at the bright prospect now opening before us of one day entering Heaven and of sharing in the glorious life of God Himself, we must never forget all that it cost our Blessed Lord to purchase for us so magnificent and so marvelous a reward. Let us count the days of His exile here upon earth and all the sufferings of body and of soul that He endured in His infancy, in His boyhood and in His mature years. Let us follow Him as He is seized and dragged before an unjust and purely human judge, and falsely accused, and wrongfully condemned. Let us turn over, in our minds, the betrayal, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the stripping off of His garments, and the carrying of the Cross. Let us stand by, in imagination, and see Him laid down upon the hard wood of the Cross. No power could ever have injured a hair of His head, had He chosen to offer the slightest resistance; but out of love for us, yes, for you and me, He stretches out His divine hands to the executioner, and He allows him to place the jagged nail within its palm and then to drive it, with infinite pain, through sinew and muscle and nerve right into the wood. Who will enumerate the blows, or measure the agony that each blow caused, or realize the whole extent and meaning of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, true God and true man? If we remember the whole purpose of His birth in the stable and the reason for which He was born, and the thirty-three years that were to follow His birth, we shall realize how very much there is to fill our hearts with gratitude and adoring love. Let us, then, my dear brethren, offer Him the precious gold of an affectionate and grateful heart.

Besides gold we must also offer Him frankincense, by which is to be understood prayer. Now prayer is of various kinds. In the first place there is the prayer of praise. This arises naturally and spontaneously from the heart of any Christian so soon as ever he

realizes what he owes to God. He will praise God for His immense goodness and mercy in coming to his aid and in rescuing him with such unparalled condescension from the most appalling of all possible fates. He will praise Him for His exceeding generosity in suffering that we might rejoice, and in dying a temporal death, that we might live an eternal life.

Then there is the prayer of petition; and this is very important, for though God knows far more clearly than we can explain, what our special needs are, yet He desires that we should recognize our own weakness and frailty, as well as the limitless divine source from which all help flows. Indeed, He has made the greatest of His gifts and the most essential of His graces dependent upon our earnest petitions. He even commands us to pray, and at the same time promises to harken to us and to hasten to our assistance. "Ask," He says, "and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you." It is not enough that He should have given His life for our redemption. It is not enough that He should have shed the last drop of His sacred blood, to open for us the golden gates of Heaven. No; His passion must be actually applied to our souls. He has died for all men without exception; yet many are irretrievably lost. Why? Because they have not had recourse to Him from whom all grace and all power is derived. They have not implored their crucified Saviour to wash them from all sin in His precious Blood. They have failed to have recourse to the sufferings and to the Passion of Christ. Instead of humbly begging Him to cleanse them they have refused to humble themselves before Him as the Author of all good. Let us take warning from their frightful fate and resolve to let our prayers be directed as incense in God's sight.

Prayer keeps us united with God. Prayer is the secret of spiritual strength. Prayer is the magical key that unlocks the infinite treasury of divine grace. It is the very source of spiritual life and strength and perseverance and ultimate salvation. No one is lost

who is faithful to this practice; and no one is saved who abandons this infallible means of strength. The saints have differed in a thousand ways; and they have been of every possible state and condition and character, but in one respect they have all been alike. They have all, *without one solitary exception,* been men of prayer. They have all made prayer the chief duty and occupation of their lives. Let us imitate their example and offer this second gift to our newborn Saviour.

The last offering that we have to present to our incarnate God is myrrh. By myrrh is symbolized penance and mortification. It is not enough that Christ should have suffered for us. We must likewise suffer. For, though our poor human sufferings are of no account *in themselves,* yet when united to His divine sufferings they become of immense value. So soon as we are united to our Blessed Lord so as to form one mystical body with Him, "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" (1 Cor. xi. 15.) Our sufferings become the sufferings of that mystical body, and what the members endure partake in some measure of the value and of the efficacy of the Head. Christ is the Head, and we are the members. He abides in us, and we abide in Him and derive from Him this incalculable privilege.

As all the saints were given to prayer, so also were they all enthusiastic in their love of suffering. They vied with one another in their thirst for self-sacrifice. Though not perhaps in identical terms, yet they all repeated the loving words of St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world" (Gal. vi. 14), and they all, like him, chastised their flesh and brought it under subjection.

If we are to walk in the footsteps of the saints we likewise must travel along the same hard road. And what is it that will give us courage to carry our Cross? What are the great incentives to penance? They are

many, but let us content ourselves with the chief. They are six in number:

1.—A strong personal love of our Crucified Lord: "He *who loves,*" says St. Augustine, "*thinks nothing hard,* whereas the least labor or cross is insupportable to him who loves not."

2.—An abiding memory of the sufferings and passion of Christ, our Model. "Christ suffered for us leaving you an example that you should *follow in His footsteps.*" (1 Peter ii. 21.)

3.—A sorrowful consciousness of our many personal sins and imperfections, which need expiation, and which *must be atoned for* either here or hereafter. "Thou shalt not go from thence till thou repay the last farthing." (Matt. v. 26.)

4.—A true appreciation of the enormous spiritual value of even the *least act of self-denial* performed through love of God; each act of which secures for us an increase of actual grace here, together with a claim to a corresponding increase of eternal glory hereafter.

5.—A recognition of the eternal weight of glory purchased by such acts. "I reckon that the *sufferings of this time* are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come." (Rom. viii. 18.) "If," declares St. John of the Cross, "you will deny yourself one joy, in the things of sense, our Lord will repay you a hundredfold in this life, spiritually and temporally. On the other hand, for one joy indulged, in the things of sense, you will have a hundred sorrows and afflictions." (Vol. II., p. 379.)

6.—The remembrance that mortification is the path that leads directly to our Father's home. "*Through many tribulations* we must enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts xiv. 21.)

In conclusion then let us in spirit kneel down beside the crib and adore and bless our incarnate God. Then, in imitation of the Wise Men, let us bring forth our most precious gifts, namely the gold of charity; the frankincense of devout and humble prayer; and the myrrh of true penance and self-sacrifice. If God, who

sees into our hearts, finds that we are sincere in offering these gifts, He will reward us with an exceedingly great reward. Then, when the brief passage of this life is over, He will receive us into His heavenly kingdom and fill us with unspeakable delights forever and forever. That God in His great mercy may bestow this priceless gift upon all of you now listening to my words, is the greatest blessing I can wish you, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Authority of the Church to Make Laws

Text:—"I beseech you by the mercy of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, *your reasonable service.*"—(*From the Epistle of the day.*)

THE present age is a very restless one. Men are growing more impatient than ever of restraint, and are constantly seeking to throw off even the last remnants of authority. Liberty! Liberty! That is the cry that rises wherever a multitude of undisciplined men are gathered together. Laws are found too galling, and each one seeks to do "what seemeth right in his own eyes" (Judges xvii. 6). They refuse to yield even a "reasonable service."

Even the Church established by Jesus Christ to guide us safely along the path of salvation amid the errors and the heresies of a world "seated in wickedness," is not suffered to carry out her divine task, or to exercise her authority, without being challenged and questioned at every step. Men question her right to command, and to lay down laws of conduct, and would confine her power within the narrowest limits.

It will be well then for us, who have to mix with all sorts and conditions of persons, and to listen to every kind of sophism and objection, to consider the grounds upon which the Church issues her mandates, and promulgates her decrees.

Let us begin by observing that the Catholic Church is no department of the state. She does not receive her commission or her authority from the people. She is not even an organism gradually brought about by the natural cravings of a man's heart for some sort of religion. No, She in no sense owes her existence to the industry of man. She is a visible, living and thoroughly organized moral authority, established by

the Eternal Son of God, while He was upon earth in the flesh, to rule and control and govern in the spiritual order, as an absolute monarch rules in the temporal order. The Church, as founded by Christ, is a perfect society, and, therefore, contains within herself all that is necessary and useful for the carrying out of the stupendous task laid upon her by her divine founder. She is (within her own sphere) independent, and stands in no need of any external permission or direction for what she does.

Her mission is to teach the way to Heaven, and to interpret and apply the law of God not merely to one or another favored people or nation as under the old dispensation, but to *all* nations. "Go and teach all nations." She is destined and commissioned to prepare and fit the hundreds of millions, subject to her, for a certain definite end, and must necessarily be armed with all the requisite means of doing so.

The civil government exists to keep order, to secure to each individual his just rights, to defend the weak, to promote the interests of the whole community. And for this purpose it is invested with the power to establish laws and to enforce regulations that may be conducive to the public good. A government if deprived of this power would not be a government at all; and instead of order, license and confusion would everywhere reign supreme. If this be true in the case of a civil government whose jurisdiction is so limited, how much more so must it be in the case of a government whose jurisdiction like that of the Church extends over the entire world.

When our Lord established His Church He conferred upon it every prerogative that was necessary for the carrying out of His purpose. Indeed, it would be absolutely unworthy of God to establish a society like the Church, and to place it here among men, for a particular and definite end, and then to refuse it the means of carrying out that end. "All power," said Jesus Christ, "is given to Me in Heaven and in earth." And as the Eternal Father sent Him to earth with full

jurisdiction, so He in His turn passed it on to the Apostles, and to those who should hereafter rule the Church in His place. "As the Father hath sent me (*i. e.*, with full jurisdiction), *so* I also send you." "Going, therefore, teach all nations." (Matt. xxviii.) Further, He gave them full authority, so that any man who refused to obey them was to be treated as reprobate. "If he will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen and the publican." This authority included most undoubtedly, the faculty of creating laws, and of regulating men's consciences, as well as their exterior actions, for the decrees imposed by the Church were to be recognized and ratified by God himself. "Amen, I say to you, whatsover you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsover you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matt. xviii.)

Now, as to the subject matter of ecclesiastical legislation, and the extent to which it can go in prescribing or prohibiting—all this is to be determined by the Church herself, who is the supreme judge of all such questions, since to her alone has been committed the charge of the entire flock. In saying so much we must guard ourselves against a misapprehension. We do not mean that the Church can make laws and impose duties arbitrarily, as though it rested with her to enforce any obligations she fancies, but in the sense that she is divinely invested with supreme authority from above, both in deciding questions regarding her own power, and in framing and promulgating laws under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, who has promised to abide with her forever, and to defend her from all error.

The reasonableness of this claim is patent to all. Why, even the state, with all its imperfections and with no special promise of protection from on high, asserts its right to exercise this prerogative, and will never allow its own competence to be impugned. The legislature in every civilized country is constantly asserting its right to pass laws and to impose restrictions

which it considers to be for the benefit and well-being of the country. It lays down marriage laws, regulates the liquor traffic, raises imports, collects taxes, forbids the importation of goods except under certain conditions, determines the procedure of the law courts, makes certain offenses penal, demands a return of the individual's income, settles who shall and who shall not be eligible to vote at elections, and in a thousand other ways proclaims its supreme authority within its own sphere. And, so long as it confines itself to its legitimate limits no reasonable man will dispute its right. It is only when it trespasses beyond its lawful boundaries and arrogates to itself the right to interfere with men's consciences, and to prescribe laws for the guidance of their conduct in spiritual things—it is only then, I say, that we denounce and condemn it, and refuse to follow its teaching. Thus, when in England, in 1534, Parliament passed an act declaring "the King to be supreme head of the Church in England, and that the Bishop of Rome had no jurisdiction at all in that country;" and when, in 1547, it decreed that "henceforth communion should be received by all under the forms of both bread and wine," it stepped beyond its own province; and dared to encroach upon the ground occupied by the Church of God, to whom alone belongs the direction of men's souls, and the administration of the Sacraments. Our blessed Lord very clearly laid down the limits of the Church and of the state, respectively, on the famous occasion when He confounded the Pharisees, who asked Him to tell them whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said: "Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites. Show me a coin of the tribute." And they offered Him a penny; and Jesus said to them: "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, Cæsar's. Then He said to them: "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matt. xxii. 17-21.)

Here our Lord clearly recognizes and acknowledges

both Church and state, and the right of each to exercise authority and to command obedience within its own domain. The Church and the state exist for a special purpose, but this purpose is by no means the same in the one case as in the other. The state is for this world, and for the present life; the Church is for the spiritual and supernatural world, and for the future life. And just as we should resent it, if the Church were to attempt to impose laws as to how we should light our streets, or build our ironclads, or train our soldiers, so we should resent it, as an intolerable piece of impertinence, if the state were to attempt to regulate divine service, and prescribe the ritual, and to forbid belief in transubstantiation, and to make it a misdemeanor to use beads or to carry crosses or *Agnus Deis,* and so forth, though all this and much more was actually done in Great Britain in the sixteenth century.

But just as we must acknowledge the legislative power in the state, so long as it is restricted within its proper boundaries, so must we acknowledge, and indeed with much more readiness and gratitude, the legislative power of the Church, so long as it is contained within the much wider boundaries of its legitimate sphere.

Obedience to the Church has ever been considered a first principle among Catholics. To hear her voice, and to obey it, is to hear and obey Christ Himself. "Who heareth you, heareth me, and who despiseth you, despiseth me"—and this is the more important, inasmuch as her commands are but the application of the divine law, and are instituted to enable us to fulfil it with greater perfection and exactness. A few illustrations will render that patent. Take, for instance, the Third Commandment of God, "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day." Here we are ordered to set aside one day of the week to the special service of God. But how? In what manner. If left to ourselves, we might introduce the strangest customs, or, very possibly, not pay any attention to the

command at all. So the Church comes to our aid, and she prescribes the *manner* in which we are to observe the command of God, and to sanctify this one day. She bids us be present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and unite with the priest, when he offers up the adorable Victim for the sins of the world, and especially for the sins of those who are actually associating themselves with Him in this tremendous act by their corporal and mental presence. How much are the faithful the gainers by this wise piece of legislation, and how many more "keep the Sunday holy" by reason of it than would be the case otherwise. So with regard to the rest from servile work.

Or take another duty, *viz.*, that of doing penance for sin and atoning for our many transgressions. "Unless you do penance," says our Lord, "you shall all likewise perish"; and again, "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Again and again we are exhorted to acts of self-denial; but if the performance of this essential duty were left entirely to our own discretion it is greatly to be feared that the immense majority of us would trouble very little about it. We would put it off, or excuse ourselves on one plea or another, and nothing would be done. Therefore, the Church, lovingly intent upon our true interests and upon the exhortations of our Lord, takes the matter in hand, and appoints both the times and the manner of our penance. She establishes certain days of fast and of abstinence, and imposes upon all her children a strict obligation of restraining their appetites, and mortifying themselves, during the forty days of Lent, the Fridays throughout the year, and on certain Ember days and vigils. Indeed it may truly be said that all her legislation is really *founded upon some law of God Himself*, expressed or understood. If she prohibits certain mischievous books in her "*Index Librorum Prohibitorum*" it is because God obliges us to avoid the occasion of sin, and warns us all against "loving the danger" (Eccl. iii. 27), lest we perish in it. If she

puts us under a strict obligation of receiving the Blessed Sacrament at least once a year, it is because He has said, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you." (John vi. 54.) If she forbids mixed marriages, and only with difficulty grants dispensation, and then only on condition that all the children of such a marriage be brought up Catholics, it is because God has said: "A man that is a heretic avoid" (Tit. iii. 10), and because He particularly warns us that "other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid; which is Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. iii. 11.)

The Church could not carry out her divine commission if she had not full legislative powers, and her presence in the world would be of very little use to the great majority of men, who need not only the general laws enunciated by God, but much more their actual application to present needs and to the exigencies of daily life. Hence, St. Paul particularly exhorts obedience to the Church's decrees. "Obey them," he says, "that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they must give an account." (Heb. xiii. 7, etc.) Indeed there is hardly anything which so distinguishes thoroughly good Catholics from those outside the Church as the attitude they take up toward their respective spiritual superiors. Among Protestants an extraordinary spirit of independence prevails; they claim the right to exercise private judgment, to interpret the Scriptures as they please, and to reject every enactment of which they disapprove.

A Catholic, on the contrary, has to exercise docility and submission, and to bring his personal judgment into subjection. His position in regard to the Church is that of a little child before its duly authorized teachers. This attitude of mind is not a matter of mere counsel, but of necessity. "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of God." Thus, we see that our Lord here makes it a condition of salvation.

There are some indeed who make a grievance of this necessity, but they have none of the spirit of Christ, who was "meek and humble of heart," and who never failed to give us lessons of obedience, even in things most difficult. What are *we,* my brethren, compared with Jesus, the only begotten of the Father, who is as truly God as He is truly man? If He, in spite of His infinite wisdom and power and dignity, was pleased to be subject to His own creatures, and not only to those who were pure and innocent, like Mary and Joseph, but to evil governors and judges, how much more should we, who are but dust and ashes, be ready to obey the authority of the Church, into whose charge we have been placed by Christ Himself!

Do we not claim Christ as our leader, our model and our King; and is His example, so much more eloquent than any words, to count for nothing? Are we to be proud because He is humble; are we to rebel because He is obedient? Or, shall we, in our arrogance and impatience of all restraint, forget that we are the children of Him, who in obedience to His Heavenly Father was born in a stable; who, when only eight days old, began to bleed for our sins, whose whole life was a continuous mortification; and who died at last nailed to an ignominious Cross. Perish the thought! Either let us renounce the very name of Catholic, or else curb our evil passions, and yield lovingly and loyally to the voice of ecclesiastical authority, feeling intimately persuaded, that in that way only we shall prove ourselves to be the true children of God. "Who heareth you, heareth me; and who despises you, despises me."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Text: "The Mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine."—(*Words from to-day's Gospel.*)

The Blessed Virgin—Our Advocate

WE are generally accustomed to associate our Divine Lord with poverty, pain and hardship, but in to-day's Gospel He is represented as taking part in a joyous marriage festival. The inspired writer informs us that "there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and that the mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus also together with His disciples." (St. John, chap. ii.)

This, my dear brethren, was to teach us that such convivial gatherings are not, in themselves, either wrong or blameworthy, and that we may lawfully and laudably take part in them when the occasion offers. There are some persons of such a puritanical cast of mind that they would condemn all innocent mirth and would look askance at any one who indulges, even occasionaly, in the simple pleasures and recreations of human life. Such as these not only expect too much of human nature, but they contradict the clearest teaching and example of Jesus Christ Himself. Yea, His very presence at the banquet spread out before the wedding guests, is a proof, if proof were wanted, that He desires us to enjoy ourselves on fitting occasions, and to help each other to throw off dull care, and to forget, at least, for a time, the trials and the vexatious troubles of life. It is but right that work should be sometimes interrupted by play, and that the bent bow should sometimes be relaxed.

Not only did our Divine Master enter into the simple joys and festive pleasures of the merry party; not only did He share in the feast, and partake of the delicacies placed before Him, but, when the wine

failed, He exercised His Divine power in order to supply the want.

The story of this miracle is full of interest, and is most deserving of our particular attention. You will observe that the guests had finished all the wine that had been provided for them, and the host was consequently placed in a somewhat awkward position. Our Blessed Lady, always so considerate and so sensitive to our least wants, must evidently have noticed His embarrassment. Her compassionate heart was touched with pity, both on account of the disappointment of the bride and the bridegroom, and their friends, and yet more on account of the very natural annoyance given to the provider of the feast.

She knew her Divine Son was all powerful, and that He could easily replenish the empty flagons, if He were so minded. She knew also the boundless compassion of His Sacred Heart. And she was also fully aware that, as His Mother, she had a right to seek His aid, and to claim His intervention. He had never refused her anything, and would certainly not refuse her now. Indeed, so confident was she of His love and affection, that she did not deem it necessary to formulate any special request. It was enough merely to state the circumstances. So she approached Him and said to Him: "They have no wine." The meaning of her words was clear. And Jesus Christ at once understood that she wished Him to come to the rescue.

What was our Lord's reply? He said: "Woman! What is it to Me and to Thee? My hour is not yet come."

This expression "woman" sounds somewhat strange to us, and, indeed, Protestants, at least those of them who know little or nothing of the language that our Lord spoke, or of the Greek into which our Lord's words were first translated by the disciple St. John, are only too ready to make use of it as an argument against the Catholic Church, which treats Our Lady with such immense honor and with such profound reverence. These Protestants insist that on this occasion

our Lady was rebuked by our Lord, and that He purposely treated her with scant civility. But, here they make a gigantic mistake. The fact is they take the English words, and argue just as though our Lord were using our own tongue. It is quite true that we English and Americans would not employ this word, when addressing a person in authority, or a person of high rank, because it is not according to the English idiom and practise. But, we must remember that our Lord spoke, not English, but Aramaic. St. John himself, who has recorded these words, gives them to us, not in English, but in Greek. Now, whatever of disrespect and of rebuke the word "woman" may bear amongst ourselves is not the question. If we wish to ascertain the sense in which our Lord used this apparently offensive word, we must find out its value and force in the language in which St. John wrote, since he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. If this word bears no sinister meaning whatsover in Greek, then the whole argument of our accusers falls to the ground. To draw conclusions from English customs and English usages, when we are discussing quite another language and quite another people, is to violate every principle of logic and of common sense.

Now, every Greek scholar knows perfectly well that in the Greek, of which the English Bible is but the translation, the word carries no hint either of reproach or of disrespect. Quite the contrary, it is a word that is used on occasions when every courtesy and deference is intended. The Greek word is "gunai" γυγη-γυναῖ. We translate it "woman"; true, but "gunai" carries with it no disagreeable or unworthy associations, as its English equivalent is apt to do. It casts no slur. It conveys no insult. We have the best authority for the statement we are putting forward. Setting aside all Catholic authorities, who may be thought to be prejudiced, let us turn to the reliable and very well known Greek dictionary, by the two Protestant scholars Liddell and Scott, and we shall find, on such unimpeachable authority, that "gunai"

means "lady," and further that it is not a term of reproach, but "a term of respect." Or, if you prefer it, we will appeal to the distinguished Protestant scholar, Dr. Westcott. He writes: "In the word 'woman,' as employed in the Greek, there is not the slightest tinge of reproof or of severity. The address is that of courteous respect, even of tenderness."

Thus, it is clear, that these words of our Divine Master cannot be pointed to as, in any way, reflecting a want either of love or of consideration. It is exceedingly necessary to say so much, as in Protestant countries the text is continually being cited against us, for controversial purposes, and every Catholic should be armed with a reply.

It may be well to add, further, that the very context itself enforces and gives countenance to this fact. For, observe, though the Blessed Virgin Mary had not pressed her Divine Son to work a miracle, nor even so much as actually begged Him to do so, but had contented herself with merely pointing out the fact that the wine had run short, He immediately exercised His omnipotence to do her will. What does this indicate? What interference do we naturally draw from it? Well, surely, that the least wish of Mary has such influence with Jesus, her beloved Son, that He treats it as if it were a command. Is further proof needed? Then, watch the Blessed Virgin. She, at least, has no doubt. With the instinct of a mother, and the penetration that comes of exalted virtue, she knows full well how to interpret the words of Jesus, and sees in them no sort of rebuke. For, what does she do? She calls the waiters and says to them: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." Now study carefully the conduct of Christ. Observe He commands the waiters to fill the great jars with water, and then He changes it into wine. In a word, He does, at once, exactly what she asked of Him, and does it for her sake, even though "His hour had not yet come." That is to say, He deliberately and willingly anticipated the hour in which He had intended to begin manifesting His Divinity

and omnipotence, and that on her account and by reason of her intervention.

From these considerations it is easy to see that, so far from proving, as so many Protestants would persuade us, that Jesus wishes no honor to be paid to Mary, it contains the strongest proof, both of the sympathy which Mary feels for her lowly children, and her readiness in appealing to Christ on their behalf, no less than of the promptness and gladness with which He is wont to assent to the slightest wish of His immaculate Mother. If this is not proof enough to satisfy the most scrupulous Protestant, perhaps he may be convinced by the yet more explicit words of the well-known Richard Whately, the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin. In a published sermon which I came across the other day, and to which anyone can gain easy access, this Anglican divine writes of our Blessed Lady, on the memorable occasion of the marriage feast, as follows: "She applied to Him, when the wine was deficient. His answer has not that roughness, indeed, which our English translation gives it, from the use of the term 'woman.' The word" (he goes on to explain), "in the original is one which denoted no disrespect, being found in the classical Greek writers applied even to a queen."* Thus we see that even a Protestant Archbishop, because he is a scholar and a learned man, openly admits that the word, so far from denoting dishonor, is commonly applied to the highest ladies of the land, even to queens, and this, too, by the best classical writers. How very natural, then, and how fitting for our Divine Redeemer to apply it to Mary, the glorious Queen of Heaven and of Earth. And how ridiculous those rabid Protestants make themselves, who strive to make capital out of the simplicity of their dupes, or who are led away by their own folly and bitter hatred.

It is an immense privilege to possess such an advocate as our Blessed Lady. For, of ourselves we who

* *Note:*—"Sermons on various subjects."—(*Ser. ix.* p. 226.)

are sinners and have often offended Almighty God, are not worthy of being listened to and heard. Though God, and God alone is the Lord of all, and though "every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration," yet is is His principle to bestow His favors on those only who ask for them, in the proper dispositions. And if we are conscious that our dispositions are very much wanting in many respects, and that we are far from possessing the faith and humility and love that ought to characterize a suppliant, then we can and shall naturally turn to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and ask her to intercede for us and with us. St. Paul tells us, in to-day's Epistle, that there is no salvation in any other name, save in the name of Jesus. "For there is no other name under Heaven given to man whereby we are to be saved." But, Jesus, who is the exhaustless fountain and only perennial source of every grace and blessing, loves to bestow His choicest gifts through the advocacy of others. Again and again, as we find from the history of God's people, He will harden His heart and close His ears to the prayers of His rebellious children, while at the same time He will allow Himself to be influenced and overcome by the importunity of His faithful servants and beloved disciples.

Thus, to take a few examples from the inspired text. We find the great servant of God, Moses, interceding for his people, and actually staying the Hand of God's anger by His powerful intercession. The Israelites had fallen away into idolatry and had turned their backs upon God, so that at last His anger was aroused against them. And He solemnly declared that He would destroy them and obliterate their name from the Book of Life. But, my dear brethren, did He actually put His threat into execution? Do we read of the wholesale destruction of this rebellious people? No. God was moved to pity, and forgave them. But why? What was the cause of this changed attitude? What marvellous power was it that held back the all-

powerful arms of the Almighty, ready to strike? It was no other than the agonizing cry of God's holy servant Moses. The Scripture informs us that, "Moses besought the Lord," and cried out to Him in the anguish of his soul, "Let Thy anger cease and be appeased," and God granted his petition.

What a marvellous picture we have here set before us! On the one hand, we contemplate a stiff-necked people, in open rebellion against God, abandoning themselves up to every species of licentiousness. On the other hand, we behold a justly indignant God about to destroy them from the face of the earth, and thereby to vindicate His Justice upon them. But one thing stands between them and destruction. But one thing can ward off their awful punishment and secure for them pardon and mercy. And what is that? Look, my dear brethren, and see. Contemplate the venerable form of the saintly patriarch Moses. His arms are stretched out in an attitude of supplication. His eyes, bedimmed with tears, are raised to Heaven, his long white beard is streaming in the wind, and there is a look of the most intense anguish stamped upon his face as he beseeches God, in burning accents, to have mercy and to spare. And, then, from the height of His throne above, God looks down upon His chosen servant and faithful follower, and calls to mind his virtue and his holiness, his zeal and loyalty. We note that He is more touched by the sanctity and devotion of this one noble and upright man than He is angered by the folly and crimes of a whole people. For the sake of Moses, He relents and extends the hand of forgiveness even to those who are most unworthy. At the prayer of this glorious servant of God, the Scripture informs us, "The Lord was appeased from doing the evil which He had spoken against His people." (Exod. xxxii.) If such be the efficacy of the intercession of the saints, whom we love to evoke, what must be the efficacy of the intercession of the chief and foremost of all the saints, the undefiled Queen of Heaven and the Mother of our Lord! Surely, it

stands to reason that her intercession must far surpass in efficacy that of all others.

In turning over the pages of the Old Testament, we come across another beautiful example, namely, that of Abraham, interceding for the city of Sodom. God was so provoked by the abominable crimes and the frightful obscene excesses into which the inhabitants of Sodom had fallen, that He declared to Abraham that He would destroy it, together with all its inhabitants, by fire from heaven. Then Abraham, wrung with grief at the thought of the appalling fate that awaited his faithless people, determined to try if he could not obtain from God a more favorable sentence. He rose up, with his heart heavy with shame and sorrow, and began to plead with the Almighty for the salvation of the city. One might have imagined that one man's virtue, arraigned against the sins and crimes of a whole city, would have a very poor chance of prevailing. But, in God's eyes, a saint outweighs a whole world of sinners. Hence the prayer of Abraham reached the very heart of God. "Abraham stood before the Lord, and drawing nigh he said: Wilt Thou destroy the just with the wicked? If there be fifty just men in the city, shall they perish withal? And wilt Thou not spare that place for the sake of the fifty just, if they be therein? Far be it from Thee to do this thing," etc., etc. And the Lord said to him, "If I find in Sodom fifty just within the city, I will spare the whole for their sake." Abraham answered: "Seeing I have once begun, I will speak to my Lord whereas I am dust and ashes. What if there be less than fifty just persons? Wilt Thou for five and forty destroy the whole city?" And He said, "I will not destroy it, if I find five and forty." And so the anxious and zealous Patriarch continued to plead and beseech, till he prevailed upon God to promise to spare the city even if but ten were to be found within its walls, who had kept themselves from sin and evil. And the Almighty said, "I will not destroy it, for the sake of ten." (Genesis xviii. 23-33.)

It is so natural for sinful man to ask others to pray for him and to call to his aid the help of the favorites and chosen servants of God, that in addition to the above we find innumerable other instances scattered throughout the pages of the Holy Scriptures. In short, it is abundantly clear that God is far more willing to listen to the prayer of His Saints, and to grant their petitions, than He is to listen to those who have deeply offended Him and treated Him with neglect and disrespect. His habitual attitude also proves, beyond all doubt, that His wish is that we should address ourselves to His saints, and that we should make use of their voices, when we desire any particular favor from him. "The prayer of the just man availeth much," says the Apostle. And therefore it is that we are exhorted so often to "pray for one another." Now if the advantages of another's prayers offered for us are very great, these advantages will increase with the greater sanctity of the advocate, and become altogether exceptional in the case of her who is acknowledged to be the saint of saints and the holiest of all creatures.

She occupies after her Divine Son, the highest place in Heaven. She sits at His right hand, as being more closely related to Him than any other. And Jesus treats her now with the same love and consideration as He did while upon earth. There is no one who can speak with Him with the same familiarity, with the same confidence, and with the same certainty of being favorably heard. Indeed, when Mary asks, Jesus seems always to do even more than merely grant her prayer. He gives more than she asks, or He gives it in a richer measure, as though He were anxious to treat her, not as an ordinary suppliant, but as a loving son would treat a queenly mother. Thus, in the instance brought before us in to-day's Gospel, all that she asked for was just sufficient wine to satisfy the wedding guests. But our Lord changed into wine the contents of six great stone water-pots, which we are expressly told were "filled up to the brim" and con-

tained two or three measures a piece. Moreover, the wine into which He changed the water was of much superior quality. This was so evident, that the chief steward was quite dumbfounded and could not account for it. In fact, St. John tells us that, "When the chief steward had actually tasted the water-made wine, and had noted the difference, he called the bridegroom and said to him, in surprise: "Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and then, when men have well drunk (and are, consequently, less discriminating), that which is worse. But thou hast kept the best wine until now." (St. John, chap. ii.)

He had not witnessed the miracle, for, speaking of the wine, the inspired writer is at pains to tell us that "he knew not whence it was." Had he seen what had taken place, he would have realized that when Jesus complied with His mother's request, He not only provided a fresh supply of wine, but wine of a far better quality.

So we shall always find it throughout life. Mary, our tender and loving Mother, is not only always ready to come to our aid, in all our difficulties and dangers, but when she takes our case in hand she obtains for us far more than we ask, and in a measure altogether surpassing our highest expectations.

Outside the Catholic Church men despise and disdain the intercession of the Saints. They are proud enough to imagine that they will be listened to quite as readily as the highest of the blessed in Heaven. And they declare that they stand in no need of any "mediator," and are quite able to present their own petitions without being indebted to any one else. They are completely satisfied with themselves and would not stoop to ask assistance of saint or of angel.

The Catholic attitude is a much humbler one. He has no confidence in himself. He is far too conscious of his own weakness and past sins and offenses to feel that he is worthy of receiving a favorable answer to his prayers. And he most willingly avails himself of the help of others. There is nothing of the Pharisee

about him. He rather takes the publican for his model, and stands "afar off," and in an attitude of profound humility acknowledging his unworthiness, beseeches the saints and angels, and above all the Immaculate Virgin, to come to his assistance and to procure for him what he is incapable of obtaining for himself.

God listens to the humble and closes His ears to the proud. And there can be no doubt but the man who stoops to ask others to help him possesses a greater degree of humility than one who proudly disdains the cooperation of any one, however favored in the Court of the Great King. Among many Catholics, indeed, the admirable custom prevails of offering *every* prayer and *every* suffering and trial, and all else to God, *through the hands of Mary*. Instead of presenting to God directly their actions, words, and thoughts, and penances, and the rest, they place them lovingly in the hands of God's Blessed Mother, and request her to deign to offer them to her Divine Son on their behalf. They do so, not because they think they cannot make the offering themselves, but simply because, in their humility, they know perfectly well that if it is made through Mary, God will receive it more willingly and hearken more readily to the prayers that accompany it. Let us, then, dear brethren, frequently have recourse to her, in all our needs. If we do so, we shall soon experience the power of her intercession. When we are in difficulties, or in want, or under some grievous trial, she will obtain succor for us. And, as at the wedding feast He changed the water into wine, at her request, so will He, when she asks, change the tasteless water of our careless and listless lives into the rich and luscious wine of true sanctity and perfection.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Destiny of the Human Race

Text:—"Many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into the exterior darkness."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

WE learn from the inspired pages of Holy Scripture, that God, in the beginning, exercised His omnipotence by creating those exquisitely beautiful and gifted Spirits, whom we call Angels. These highly endowed intelligences formed an immense host, that no man can number, and were divided into nine gigantic Choirs, forming three celestial hierarchies. The first hierarchy is composed of the Seraphim, the Cherubim, and the Thrones; the second is made up of the Dominations, the Virtues, and the Powers; and the third of the Principalites, the Archangels, and the simple Angels, as saints and theologians teach us.

The inspired writer further informs us that God put these celestial beings on their trial, and that no less than a third part of their number proved unfaithful, fell miserably into sin, and were, in consequence, cast out of Heaven, and condemned to eternal punishment in hell. St. John speaks of this appalling rebellion and its consequences in his Apocalypse, when he writes: "A sign appeared in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns; and on his heads, seven diadems; and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth." (Apoc. xii. 3, 4.)

The dragon or the serpent or Satan, is no other than the devil, who, though once one of the fairest and brightest of the heavenly host, has now become the leader and chief of the demons. By the "stars of heaven," St. John means the Angels, who were se-

duced by his evil influence and example, and who now constitute the devils in hell. It is generally held that considerable numbers fell from each of the nine Choirs, and that the aggregate reaches a multitude too vast to reckon or to imagine.

Though destined by God's great mercy to occupy thrones of eternal glory in Heaven, they proved themselves all unworthy of so stupendous a privilege, and were foolish enough to forfeit their magnificent positions by their pride and disobedience.

Hence, the question arises: Who then will now fill these vacant places? Who, if we may so express ourselves, will occupy their empty thrones? Theologians tell us that Almighty God resolved to create man, in order that he and his prolific race might enter into the places abandoned by and forfeited by the angelic rebels.

How long, then, will the human race endure? How long will sons and daughters continue to be born, and to fill the earth from sea to sea? The answer must be: until every vacancy in Heaven is filled up. That is to say, until the number of human beings who are saved and sanctified equals the number of the fallen angels.

God alone knows how many that may be, and God alone knows what proportion of the human family will ultimately be saved, so that no one can say how much longer the earth may continue to be the habitation of men. All we know with absolute certainty is that the earth, which had a beginning, will also have an end, but that the end will not be, until God's designs have been entirely accomplished.

Of one thing we are sure, *viz.:* a time will come, when the very last of all our race will die, and pass away, and when the full number of human beings, as ordained and determined by God, will have run their course. Let us, in imagination, consider that moment to have already arrived. Man, let us suppose, is no more to be found upon earth. The immense human family is complete. The entire race has been

through its trial, and the good and the loyal are, now and forever, separated from the bad and the disloyal; the sheep are divided by an impassible barrier from the goats.

The countless millions who once lived and toiled, and bought and sold, on earth, have entered into eternity. The busy, noisy, active crowds that filled our towns and cities, that spread themselves over every country and kingdom, and occupied even vast continents, and made of this earth a place of pleasure and amusement or of hard labor and work, have all disappeared, and their place here is known no more. They are now fixed irrecoverably in eternity. They are in *Heaven* or in *hell*. Their brief life is over. Their task is done. They have had their chance, and have made either a good or a bad use of it. They have chosen their own path, and must now abide by their choice. The books are closed; the accounts are made up: the keys of Heaven and of hell are cast into the abyss.

It is quite certain, that all men, without one solitary exception, have been created by the goodness of God to be eternally happy. It is certain that God sincerely wished all to be saved, and to enjoy a life of endless joy and happiness with Him. Nay more, it is absolutely certain that God actually gave to one and all sufficient grace to conquer temptation and to attain to everlasting life, and that no single man, woman or child will be lost, except through his own personal fault.

Yes; all this is taught us, by an infallible Church. Yet, there is no doubt but that, in spite of this, many will be lost. Many will have proved unfaithful, and have fallen into mortal sin, and have died without repenting, and, in that case, we may truly say that they have already signed and sealed their own doom. "Many are called, but few are chosen." "Wide is the gate and broad the path, that leads to damnation, and many are they that go in thereat." "Strive to enter

by the narrow gate, for many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able."

These, and many other texts, clearly indicate that Heaven is not destined to hold the entire race of man, but that many will fall short of that glorious goal.

Indeed, it is commonly said, that when we reach Heaven (supposing we are fortunate enough to get there), startling surprises await us. We shall probably see among the Saints of God many whom we never dreamed of meeting there, and, on the other hand, we shall miss many of those, of whose Salvation we felt absolutely sure. This is more or less clearly indicated in the words of our Divine Master just read to you. And it will be well for us to ponder over them, as they contain a timely admonition and a solemn warning. The words I refer to are as follows: "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into the exterior darkness; where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

These words mean that many members of the human race, who have not had the chances and the splendid opportunities that Catholics have, will nevertheless save their souls; whereas, many Catholics who have had such exceptional graces and such abundant means of Salvation, will, in spite of them, be lost for all eternity. Which proves that a man who is really faithful and loyal to the light he has, even though it may be but slight and dim, may succeed far better than another who basks in the full blaze of the noonday sun, if he be careless and indifferent and take little or no interest in following the narrow path which alone leads to eternal beatitude.

"Many shall come from the east and the west." Undoubtedly: for even outside the visible fold of the Church are to be found good and faithful men, who are groping in the darkness of heresy, yet earnestly making use of such poor light as they have to accomplish God's will. They may be mistaken, and badly

informed in spiritual matters, and full of unconscious prejudices, but they act up to their convictions, and are really striving to please and satisfy God, in their own way, and God, Who reads the heart and Who alone knows the secret intentions and motives, will give them full credit, and will save them, by His "uncovenanted mercies," on account of their invincible ignorance. They will come, "from the east and the west," that is to say, from sects and denominations, which differ from the true Catholic Church, as east differs from west. They will be found, not only among those who are friendly and on good terms with the immaculate Spouse of Christ, but also among those who are her sworn enemies. Yea, among those who persecute and ill-treat her, and who think they are doing an honor to God, by putting her prophets and faithful followers to death. Some (perhaps we may say *many*) of these are carried away by a mistaken zeal, like Saul of Tarsus, who, before his conversion, "breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts ix. 1), but who afterwards became their chief champion and defender, so soon as he had learned the truth. These, whether they be many or few, will be judged according to the motives that swayed and influenced them, and not by their actual performances. And, if they have acted honestly and without any sinful purpose, they will receive a merciful sentence from the hand of the Supreme Judge, and be accorded a place among the faithful children of God. Or, to express the same thought, in the language of our Lord, "They will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven."

This thought should have two important effects upon us Catholics: In the first place, it should make us very slow to judge our non-Catholic neighbors. They are, of course, hopelessly wrong. Their Sect or Denomination is absolutely false, and teaches doctrines contrary to God's revealed truth. Yet, they may be where they are through no fault of their own.

Heresy may have been their daily food, it may have been drawn in, unconsciously, and as it were, with their mother's milk. They may have always breathed the atmosphere of Protestantism, and have grown up with the idea of their own self-sufficiency and of the inalienable right of every man to the full exercise of his private judgment. In a word, there may be conditions, so numerous, so varied, so unaccountable in their force, so strange in their influence, and so far-reaching in their effects, that it becomes impossible for any living soul to determine how far a non-Catholic is responsible, or whether he be responsible at all, for not accepting the revealed truth in all its integrity and submitting to the Church. In such matters, we have no right whatever to pass judgment. We possess neither the authority nor the power to determine the mental condition of any one. Nor can we tell whether the motives which are strong enough for us, have ever been so much as proposed to him, or if proposed, ever adequately grasped, or seriously considered. There are probably thousands upon thousands, who actually belong to the soul of the Church, while not forming a part of the body. Thousands, who are not only in good faith, but who are serving God better than many so-called Catholics, and who will "sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," while many nominal Catholics, who are the true "children of the kingdom, will be cast out into the exterior darkness," among the wicked and the reprobate.

It is a magnificent privilege to be a Catholic. The true faith is one of the grandest, greatest and most sublime gifts of God to man. It is a gift we can never be sufficiently grateful for, and which we can never value too highly, or, indeed, half highly enough. But, like every gift, it carries great obligations. It makes those who possess it doubly responsible. They have to watch over this inestimable treasure, to cultivate it, to make it bear fruit, to "trade with it," as the Scripture says, not to "bury it in a napkin." We have no warrant to treat it as if it were a charm or a talis-

man, that will work its marvellous effects of itself and independently of our own personal efforts and co-operation. No, our responsibilities increase and grow in intensity, with every additional grace and favor we receive. "To whom much has been given, much shall be required."

And this brings us to the *second* consideration, to which we have referred. And that is the uncertainty of our own Salvation. If, indeed, we are in any danger of taking undue complacency in our position, as Catholics; if we are ever in danger of presuming on our merits and good works; or of flattering ourselves that we are secure, just because we possess the full truth, or because we have the Sacraments to help us, and the Holy Sacrifice to be a propitiation for us, and the infallible authority of the Church to guide us, then these Divine Words of our Incarnate God ought to teach us modesty and diffidence and convince us that, in spite of all our advantages and all our wholly exceptional opportunities, we are nevertheless poor, weak mortals, easily overcome and easily led astray.

The expression employed by Jesus Christ is strikingly clear, and can be mistaken by no one. "The children of the Kingdom of Heaven," that is to say, those who belong by legitimate profession and formal incorporation to the kingdom of Christ here below, which is the Church, shall be cast out, while the stranger and the alien, who have had no share (at all events, no *recognized* and *external* share) in that kingdom will enjoy the privilege of true children, and be received into everlasting Tabernacles. Thus it is clearly laid down, by the very highest authority, that although there is but one only true and infallible Church, yet many outside her visible fold will be saved, whereas, many living within her fold will be lost.

This deplorable fact means not that there is or can be anything lacking or deficient in the glorious Church which Christ has founded, but simply that man has free will, and strong passions, and subtle enemies, and

that he can resist even the strongest graces, and neglect the most powerful aids to goodness and virtue. Faith does not dispense us from all care and solicitude. Though it provides us with most abundant means, it does not force us to avail ourselves of them. It places arms in our hands; it does not compel us to use them. It promises us certain victory over all enemies, but only on certain conditions. It supplies innumerable motives, and motives of the most cogent and powerful character, but it does not oblige us to ponder over them, and to appreciate their weight and irresistible force.

Look around on the world of to-day. Consider how some Catholics live. Study their habits, their mode of life, their worldliness, their indifference and carelessness in spiritual matters. How many there are who give themselves up to a career of pleasure, dissipation, and amusement. How many act and talk as though life were one long holiday, without duties, or obligations, or responsibilities. How many spend the all too precious moments in fluttering, like butterflies, from one earthly dissipation to another; intent merely on things of time. They discuss the last scandal; the most recent fashions; the passing events of the day; and the ever-varying fortunes of social or political parties. They may go to Mass, at least on Sundays, but they have no realization of the stupendous importance of the awful sacrifice that they are assisting at, and remain cold and unaffected. They may mutter a prayer occasionally, but they pray without heart, and without any strong desire to be heard. In short, they are Catholics in name; they maintain a certain outward conformity to the faith, and are to be seen at church, at stated intervals, but that is all.

Religion is but a cloak that lies very lightly upon them, and scarcely touches their innermost soul. It is not regarded as "the one thing necessary"; it does not take hold of and retain possession of the very marrow and essence of their being. It does not come down upon them like a Pentecostal fire and consume them

with a holy zeal for God and divine things. The fact is, they are ever striving after that most impossible of all achievements, *viz.*, to serve, at one and the same time, God and mammon. They may be willing enough to enjoy the delights of the next world, but, whatever happens, they have made up their minds that they are going to enjoy the delights of this. The result is that, little by little, the visible world gains a closer and closer hold upon them; it engages all their attention; it occupies their heart and affections; and the spiritual world fades away, and gradually loses whatever little influence it once possessed. They neglect the Sacraments; they become blind to the gravity and heinousness of sin; they take no real trouble to avoid temptations; they fall again and again into grievous sin, and at last God, in punishment, allows them to die in their sins. Thus, while the stranger and the alien is received into God's heavenly Home, the "children of His Kingdom," that is to say, those who have lived and spent their days in the bosom of the Church, are "cast out into the exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

What an appalling fate! What a terrible end to a careless life! What anguish and remorse will then seize upon the poor outcast soul, when it at last realizes the fruits of its inattention and culpable lassitude. It might so easily have been saved. It had such powerful, such abundant, such easy means at its disposal, if only it had deemed it worth while to make use of them; but they were all neglected. It had no time for such things, it was wholly absorbed by the trivialities and the vanities of the passing moment. Others, with only a hundreth part of its opportunities, succeeded in saving their souls. Others, without the special graces and blessings, and spiritual favors that God had rained with such abundance upon that soul, have nevertheless made such a good use of the few graces given them, that they have entered into eternal Glory, while that soul is left to bemoan and curse its folly for all eternity.

My brethren, let us arouse ourselves to a sense of our true position. We may, indeed, be Catholics, but that of itself is no security. The question is, are we downright *practical* Catholics? Are we living up to the high standard set by the Church? *"Noblesse oblige."* If we are the true children of Christ, then let us act as such. If we claim Him as our Father, then let us think of Him, obey Him, and treat Him with the respect, and the affection and the love of sons.

It is a grand thing to be a Catholic, true. But it were better far to be a savage or a poor ignorant heathen, than a Catholic *who turns his back upon his Lord and Master,* and loses his own soul. If one is resolved to go to hell, it were less disastrous to go there as an unbeliever and an infidel, than as a responsible child of the Church. By comparison with him the heathen is almost blameless. He knows nothing of the authority of the Church. He has never so much as heard of the seven Sacraments; nor has he ever assisted at the adorable Sacrifice of the altar, or once received the Sacred Body and Blood of the Son of God. The many exhortations and moving discourses, the warnings and admonitions and the repeated calls to a better life, that Catholics receive, have been denied to him. The example of the saints, the courage of the martyrs, and the holy lives of so many fellow Christians are stimulants to piety and sanctification which are known to us who are of the household of the faith, but wholly unknown to outsiders.

For these and for many other reasons, which there is no time to specify, God will deal much more mercifully with a pagan, who has rebelled against Him, than with a Catholic, whom He has loaded with His gifts, and surrounded with His graces, but who, nevertheless, has broken His Commands, and has died unrepentant and unabsolved. The baseness and ingratitude of the one bears no sort of proportion to that of the other, so that, if the first is to be beaten with "whips," the second will be scourged with "scorpions."

(3 Kings xii. 11.) There are "many mansions" in hell, as there are in Heaven; but the lowest of these will be reserved for the bad, disobedient, ungrateful and faithless members of the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

Let us then beware, and if we are growing careless, let us tremble lest we, like so many others, should, perchance, end miserably, and incur God's just but awful anger. For, the Apostle assures us, that: "It is an awful thing (above all, for a bad Catholic) to fall into the hands of the living God." May God in His mercy guard us from so appalling a fate. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Virtue of Divine Faith

Text:—"And Jesus said to them: Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

OF all virtues, to be exercised by a devout Catholic, the first and foremost is faith. When we say the first, we do not mean the highest or the most meritorious, for, in those respects both hope and charity, no doubt, surpass it. We mean merely that it is the first, in the chronological order, and the most essential. That it is the most essential is clearly proved from the fact that, until we possess faith, it is impossible to advance to the exercise of hope or of charity, or indeed of any other supernatural virtue whatsoever.

A mansion may be a much more magnificent thing, in itself, than the rude foundation on which it rests; yet, without the foundation there can never be a mansion at all. So, in a similar way other virtues may be, and are, more sublime and more admirable than faith; yet, without faith they could never exist at all. From this we can readily understand the force of the Apostle's teaching, *viz.*, "without faith, it is impossible to please God."

But, what is faith? Before giving a direct answer to this important question, it will be well to make some preliminary remarks, which will help us to realize the situation more clearly.

Man possesses two great gifts, *viz.*, intellect and free-will. Both have their own special sphere of action; both are necessary for man's well being. If we compare man to a machine, then the will may be described as the driving power, and the intellect as the directing power. Without the will, he can not move at all; without the intellect, he may, indeed, move, but he would not know whither to direct his movements.

If I liken myself to a ship, then my "will" would be represented by the powerful engines that urge the vessel on, through the ocean; and my "intellect" would be represented by the compass, which points out the way, and enables me to steer along the proper course and to reach my objective in safety. The motive power, however great, would be of no avail, unless the route were made manifest. Knowledge is essential.

Now, these principles hold good, whether I am guiding a material bark across the ocean, from one port to another, or whether I am guiding my immaterial, immortal soul from earth to Heaven, across the tempestuous sea of the present life.

In both cases, knowledge is a requisite, as a means to an end. But, taking knowledge in the broadest sense, we may ask, how is it acquired? In various ways. There are some truths that we can learn by the mere exercise of our senses: That the grass is green; that birds fly; that the sun shines, are truths that we learn from personal observation. So again: that fire burns; that water quenches thirst, and that roses smell sweet, are all propositions certified to by direct experience. Other truths, of a less obvious kind, I may also acquire, without help from any one else, by the mere exercise of my reason.

Thus I need no one to tell me that the whole of any object is greater than a mere part: or that things, which are equal to the same thing, are equal to one another; and so forth. Further, by a process of mere ratiocination, I may advance to the discovery of many more recondite truths, as is done in mathematics and geometry.

But, in spite of all these varied means of information, there is no doubt but that our chief source of knowledge is neither our own reasoning nor our personal observation, but rather the testimony of others. Of all the knowledge we now possess, by far the greater portion comes to us on the authority of outsiders. Thus, to take a few examples at random: I know that China exists, and India, and Japan. I know that

Cæsar was a great general, and that he wrote certain commentaries; and that Napoleon was a mighty commander, and was taken prisoner, and died at St. Helena. I know, further, that the earth turns on its axis, and that the succession of summer and winter is caused by the revolution of the earth round the sun. How do I know these, and countless other similar facts? I have acquired them by no personal industry. They all come to me solely on the testimony of other persons. I accept them without hesitation and without doubt; *but simply and solely upon authority.*

Now, the acceptance of a statement, upon the authority of another, is what is called *faith;* and the character of that faith will vary, with the character and reliability of the authority invoked.

If the authority be human, then faith is simply human faith. If the authority be divine, then the faith is divine faith. Hence, we may define Divine Faith to be *the acceptance of any statements, on the authority of God.*

Now comes the question: Is faith reasonable? (Speaking in the abstract.) Is it right and just that we should submit our intellect to another, and accept statement after statement on his simple assurance? Our answer is: It depends. If the authority on which we rest is trustworthy, then we are acting with wisdom and prudence; if not, then we are acting foolishly.

A simple servant girl meets a wandering gypsy, who promises to tell her her fortune, if she will but cross her hand with a shilling. She firmly believes her words. Why? Simply, it would seem, because she is old and ugly and has a hooked nose and wears a sugar-loaf hat. In this case the servant girl does, indeed, exercise faith, but it is a most ill-founded and unreasonable faith. It rests on a tottering foundation. It is built on the sand.

On the other hand; instead of a foolish serving maid, take a prudent man, who lies sick, but wishes to get well. After due inquiry, he calls to his bedside the most learned physician he can find—one who has

already won for himself a high reputation in his own profession. He not only asks his advice, but he believes his words, puts himself into his hands, and carefully follows out all his directions. In a word, he "exercises faith" in his physician. He believes his words, and acts upon them. This is not an unreasonable, but a most reasonable and proper faith; and though it is merely human faith, its exercise is dictated by prudence and approved by common sense. The foundation of his faith here is practically firm and secure.

The physician has made a life-long study of the human body and of the various diseases to which it is exposed, and is able to give me valuable information concerning my special ailment and concerning the rules I must follow in order to recover my lost health and strength. This knowledge, which I can acquire in no other way, is invaluable; still, it has to do only with my bodily health; *i. e.*, only with the inferior part of my being. It has nothing to do with that which is immeasurably more important, *viz.*, with my soul.

If this world were the only world, such mere human faith and such mere physical knowledge might suffice. But we have immortal souls. We are destined to live on and on, forever, in a future world. Therefore, it is essential that we should know both what we have to do and what we have to avoid in order to become entitled to a place in the kingdom of Heaven—when this world shall have vanished away.

So soon as ever I learn that eternal life is offered to me, I wish to know if the offer depends on any special conditions. If I am answered in the affirmative I at once feel the necessity of learning what those conditions are. Is sin, for instance, an insurmountable barrier to my entrance into Heaven? If so, then I have so to ask a further question, *viz.*, how is sin to be remitted and washed out? These, and a thousand similar points must be determined, and set at rest, before I can feel any security of salvation.

Now, how am I to get answers to these most practical and pressing questions?

They are questions, kindly observe, that differ from all others, especially in two respects. In the first place, by reason of their tremendous importance. For they concern our most personal and vital interests. They are connected with the state and condition of our souls, not during the brief moments of our present existence, but during the limitless ages of eternity. They have to do with the rescuing us from everlasting torment, and the securing for us everlasting joy and happiness.

But if these questions differ from all others in importance, they differ from all others also in this, that no mere human teacher or philosopher, however clever and gifted, can hope to be able to solve them. They are questions which touch upon the most intimate nature and attributes of God, on His inscrutable providence, and on the end and purpose of our creation and destiny.

That is to say, the knowledge needed is not such that I or any man, however learned and wise, can acquire by his own industry. It is a knowledge, not only greater than the human mind can arrive at by study, but a knowledge of an altogether higher and sublimer order. It is supernatural, and falls not within the circle of earthly experience. It embraces many truths, which are wholly above our comprehension, and many which depend wholly and solely upon the personal will and decree of an absolutely free God. Without some external aid, how shall we—how *can* we—arrive at a certain knowledge of such supernatural truths? "Hardly," says the wise man, "hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon the earth, and with labor do we find the things that are before us; but the things that are in Heaven, who shall search?" (Wisdom ix. 16.)

If we are ever to reach Heaven, it is absolutely necessary that we should know the way there; but since, from the very nature of the case, it is wholly impossible for us to discover it of ourselves, God, in His infinite mercy, has been pleased to reveal it to us, and

to enlighten our darkness. This is referred to by Isaias, when he says: "The people, that walked in darkness have seen a great light. To them who dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, to them light is risen." (Isaias ix. 2.) Similarly, when at a later date, our Lord appearing to St. Paul, bade him carry the truths of the Gospel to the Gentiles, He declared that He sent him in order "to open their eyes, that they may be converted from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a lot amongst the saints." (Acts xxv. 18.)

In these and other passages we clearly see (1), the absolute necessity of a revelation on the part of Almighty God, and (2), of a firm *faith* upon our part, in what He reveals. What we cannot discover of ourselves He makes known to us, and by accepting these truths and acting upon them, we obtain, at last, eternal life.

The obligation of believing God is manifest, for, "if the testimony of man is great, the testimony of God is greater," as St. John observes. (1 John v. 9.) God is infintely wise. He knows all things, and can neither deceive nor be deceived, so that there is no ground for doubt or hesitation. To call into question any statement made by God is to insult His infinite majesty, and to commit a most grave sin. Why? St. John himself gives us the reason. It is because "he that believeth not, maketh God a liar, since he believeth not the testimony which God hath given of his Son." (1 John v. 19.) Indeed, there is no sin so deadly, no sin that is so severely punished as the rejection of His doctrine, and the refusal to accept His teaching. When commissioning His Apostles to go and teach all nations those things which He had commanded them, He made use of these emphatic words: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned."

On another occasion our blessed Lord spoke yet more severely concerning unbelievers, and added

threats. After sending His Apostles to make known His saving doctrine far and wide, over the whole world, He breaks forth in these memorable and truly awful threats: "Whosoever shall not hear you, nor receive your words, going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Amen, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city." (Matt. x. 14.)

The memory of the enormity of the crimes that disgraced the inhabitants of those cities is still fresh. Well, terrible though it was, our Lord tells us that a worse fate awaits wilful unbelievers than awaited them. "It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah" than for unbelievers in the last day.

Hence, the Catholic Church, the very mouthpiece of Jesus Christ, has always taught faith in God's word to be a matter of spiritual life or death. To hold the faith is a condition of salvation. The denial of any single article is heresy; and heresy, in the mind of the Church, is classed with idolatry and apostasy. From the earliest Councils down to the very last, *viz.*, that of the Vatican, assent to Catholic doctrine is required under pain of excommunication or *anathema,* and assent to heretical doctrine is reprobated, under the same spiritual censures. Further, the assent to the teachings of the Church must be interior and sincere, as well as outward and manifest.

There are four special motives urging us to exercise the great theological virtue of divine faith:

The first two and most obvious have already been referred to, *viz.*, First, because God is the infinite truth, and is infinitely worthy of our trust and confidence. Second, because we can acquire in no other way the knowledge which is essential to our well-being in this world, and still more, to our well-being in the next. In addition to these, there is a third, and that is because it is by the exercise of faith that we offer to God the complete homage and adoration of our intellect.

Our will is made subject to God, by obedience. We subject our will when we carry out the commands that He imposes upon us. We thereby acknowledge that He is master of our wills, and that we owe Him the sacrifice of our personal desires and inclinations. But in all this our intellect takes no important share; and no violence is done to it. Our reason stands, as it were, apart and unconcerned. Yet reason is one of God's greatest gifts to man, and should also acknowledge His sovereignty. It, too, must pay fealty. But how is this done? By the exercise of faith, that is to say, by forcing our reason to submit to God's revelation and to accept as true the various doctrines which He proposes, however difficult and however obscure they may seem to us. Just as we offer to God the sacrifice of our own wills, when we resist and overcome them to do God's will, so we offer Him, likewise, the sacrifice of our own intellect or reason when we resist and overcome its dictates, in order to accept the revelations of Almighty God, and prostrate our puny intellect in the dust before God's infinite intellect.

Take an illustration. Thus: God enunciates some sublime doctrine, such as that of the blessed Sacrament. We listen with respectful wonder as He unfolds, one by one, the marvels contained in that dogma. We try in vain to grapple with them, and to render them clear. But we fail to understand. We find ourselves face to face with mystery. Our intellect cannot help us. We must either reject the doctrine and exclaim, with the unbelieving Jews: "How can this man give his flesh to eat and his blood to drink and leave Him and walk with Him no more?" Or we must throw ourselves wholly upon the veracity of God, and abandon ourselves unreservedly to Him, before whom the greatest intellect is immeasurably less than is the glow-worm's spark before the noonday sun. It is not here so much a question of the submission of our will (though our will, too, has a share, and a very important share, in every act of faith) as the submission of our intellect.

In presence of any great mystery, our intellect is staggered. The doctrine is incomprehensible. We are wholly unable to reach to its heights, or to sink to its depths; it lies quite outside the field of human investigation. But, two courses lie open to us. We must either trust to our own feeble light and turn away from Him who is "the light of the world," and "walk no more with Him" (John vi.), or else we must humble ourselves and force our reason to blindly accept that which it can neither see nor comprehend, simply and solely on the authority of God; crying out with St. Peter: "Lord! to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life."

In short, by Faith we pay homage to God with the highest of our faculties, and, in the words of St. Paul, bring our proud reason into captivity, unto the obedience of Christ.

These are three motives for exercising faith. A fourth motive is that we may thereby honor God, in a spirit of love and gratitude, who has first deigned to honor us with His confidence, in imparting to us the secrets of His own mind.

Let us develop this thought a little. Though faith is quite distinct from charity, yet there is a most intimate connection between them. Faith leads up to the higher virtue. The very wish, on the part of God, to afford us some glimpse of His own divine nature and to make known to us the hidden counsels of His own mind, is well calculated to enkindle our love, and to draw us more closely toward Him. It even helps to produce that unity of mind, which is one of the strongest bonds of true affection. It puts our intellects in complete harmony with God's intellect. It enables us, in a measure, to see as He sees, to judge of things as He judges, and to feed upon the selfsame truths; so that not only the *will* becomes, in a certain sense, one with God's will, but the *created intellect* becomes one with the *uncreated*. The soul becomes thus the confidant of God; is allowed to penetrate into the secrets of His mind, and to share His own knowl-

edge. For this our blessed Redeemer gratefully returned thanks to His heavenly Father: "I confess to Thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." (Luke x. 21.) So, too, for a like reason, He says to His disciples: "I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard from the Father I have made known to you." (John xv. 15.)

Thus, it is clearly seen that the goodness and love of God, in thus opening out to us the treasures of His knowledge, call for a prompt and loyal faith in all He reveals, and spurs us on, by yet another strong motive, to accept, with unwavering trust, all that He proposes to our belief.

Let us, dear brethren, value this gift of Divine Faith as the greatest of treasures. Let us watch over it and guard it with the most scrupulous care, and beg Almighty God to strengthen it within us daily more and more. Let us resolve to act up to the dictates of faith; to live ever in the light and under the guidance of faith, and so to honor it by our conduct and example, that others, seeing our good works, may be led on from mere admiration to imitation, until they come to share our privileges and to acknowledge the same authority instituted by God as His own infallible mouthpiece, namely, the one only true God-established Roman Catholic Church. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Charity

Text:—"Above all these things, have charity, which is the bond of perfection."—(*From the Epistle of the day.*)

WHEN our Blessed Lord was born, we are told that wise men from the East came to adore Him. They also brought valuable gifts, to lay at His feet, in token of their love and loyalty. Now, among these gifts the inspired writer particularly mentions gold, frankincense and myrrh.

These three material gifts were not only precious in themselves, but they also represented three far more precious *spiritual* gifts, which every true adorer of Christ is expected to bring with him, when he seeks the presence and the friendship of his incarnate God. These three gifts are firstly, the gift of charity, symbolized by gold; secondly, the gift of prayer, symbolized by incense; and lastly, the gift of penance and mortification, which are symbolized by myrrh, which is exceedingly bitter and disagreeable to the taste.

As time will not allow of our treating all these gifts this morning, we will confine our remarks to the first alone, which is first not only in the chronological order, but also in importance.

As we have already observed, the virtue of charity is symbolized by gold. But why? Because, just as gold is by far the most beautiful and the most precious of all metals, so charity is by far the most beautiful and the most precious of all virtues. At the very summit of the scale, the Apostle places the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity; but even "of these three the greatest, he tells us is charity." (1 Cor. xiii. 13.)

Furthermore, just as even the smallest and the meanest object is of value if it be fashioned out of

pure gold—even gold dust being highly prized—so the most insignificant and the meanest act a man can perform becomes pleasing and precious in God's sight, if it be performed out of pure and heartfelt charity.

Charity is, of course, twofold. It embraces the love of God, on the one hand, and the love of man on the other. In our present discourse we will dwell chiefly on the love we owe to our fellow creatures, for it is to this love that St. Paul especially refers in his Epistle, when he writes: "Love one another with the charity of brotherhood;" and also because St. John warns us that: "he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, can hardly be expected to love God, whom he seeth not." (1 John iv. 20.)

But here we must be careful to remember that even our love of the brethren must have its root and foundation in our love of God. We love our neighbor because he is a creature of God; because he is made to His divine image; and because he is as much a child of God and an heir to the Kingdom of Heaven as we are; and also because it is God's express will that we should thus treat him. True charity, even towards our neighbor, always supposes, directly or indirectly, God as our motive. It is precisely this love of God bubbling up in our hearts, and overflowing on to others, that gives to our acts of kindness and generosity their supernatural value. In fact, if the fire of divine love burns not in our hearts, all our benevolence and philanthropy is, from a supernatural point of view, worth nothing. "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) Observe the Apostle declares it to be not merely of little worth before God, but of no supernatural worth at all. "It profiteth NOTHING."

We need not delay here to consider precisely what is meant by loving our neighbor. In general it may suffice to say that it is acting towards him as we would wish him to act towards us. It is treating others as we ourselves would wish to be treated by others. Our

chief difficulty is not to learn what brotherly love means, nor what we ought to do, but rather to discover the force and cogency of the motives urging us to practise it. Therefore we will at once pass on to a consideration of the chief motives inducing and urging us to exercise this most beautiful and most necessary duty.

The first motive is because we are called upon to imitate the example of our Lord, whose whole life is summed up in the words: "He went about doing good." He is "the way, the truth and the life," and the most perfect model that can be set before us. Now His whole life was one continuous exercise of compassionate love. It was love that brought Him down to this sinful world; it was love that induced Him to clothe Himself in the rags of our humanity. It was love that caused Him to choose to share our poverty and want, and our life of toil and of sorrow. He was at all times an eye to the blind, and a hand to the maimed. Sorrow always found in Him a comforter and grief a solace. If He exercised His omnipotence it was always on behalf of the needy and the afflicted. Nor was this all. Not content with feeding the hungry, curing the sick, exorcising the possessed, and raising even the dead to life, He willingly and gladly endured insults, humiliations and sufferings in order to atone for the sins of His brethren, and finally offered up His life for their salvation by dying an agonizing death on the ignominious altar of the Cross. "In this," says St. John, "we have *known the charity of God,* because He hath laid down His life for us: and we ought (to be ready) to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John iii. 16.) Indeed, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death." (1 John iii. 14.) We are actually *commanded* to walk in the footsteps of our Lord. How can we possibly be said to do so if we have no true love one for the other?

A second motive for loving our neighbor is the express command of Almighty God. If even under the

Old dispensation men were commanded to love one another, in the New the command has become even yet more peremptory and absolute. Indeed, so much higher a degree of generosity and of self-sacrifice is expected in our love since the coming of Christ into the world, that our Lord speaks of it as a *New* precept. "A *new* commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John xiii. 34.) To love, as ordinary men love, is not enough. We must love as Christ loved. Thus we must love even our enemies as well as our friends, and be ready, not only to bear with them patiently, but to deny ourselves and to suffer even for their sakes: in a word, to love them according to the divine Model; to love them even as Christ has loved us.

This command may seem an exceedingly difficult one, and so it would be had not our merciful Saviour rendered it comparatively easy by attaching to its fulfillment some most striking and marvellous advantages. In the first place, He makes it the special mark or characteristic of His disciples. As earthly kings put their own special courtiers and servants into livery, in order that all who see them may recognize them by their dress, as members of the royal household, so does Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, put a livery upon us. It is a spiritual livery as befits a spiritual kingdom, and consists in the strong self-sacrificing love of our neighbor. "By this let all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another." If we have a proper estimate of the infinite splendor and uncreated majesty of God, we shall deem it the highest privilege to be associated with Him, and to wear His livery. And we shall strive at all times, and in all circumstances, to be recognized as His faithful followers, by living in perfect harmony with our neighbors and companions, and by making every effort to help them in their needs, and to sympathize with them in every trial or sorrow. This strong mutual charity was so striking and so conspicuous among the early followers of Christ that it arrested the attention even

of the very pagans, who, witnessing the beautiful union of heart and mind that existed between all classes of the faithful, were wont to break out in astonishment, "O! See! How these Christians love one another." Let us examine ourselves, brethren, and learn how far we may rightfully claim to be wearing this splendid livery of the Eternal and Infinite King; and with what care and watchfulness we strive to keep it ever spotless and bright. If our hearts reprove us not, let us thank God.

Another tremendous advantage of doing good to our neighbor arises from the most gracious and wholly unexpected promise of Christ to accept every service we render to a fellow creature as a service rendered to Himself. "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. xxv. 40.) When we read the history of our Lord's life in the Scriptures, and are told of His poverty and suffering, and how He often had not enough even to eat or drink: nor even a place on which to lay His head; do we not wish that we had been near at the time, in order that we might have given Him of our best? Do we not feel how generous we should have been, and what an honor we should have esteemed it to lay our gifts at His feet? and to do all in our power to supply His needs. Truly. But are these sentiments genuine? Do we really mean what we say? If so, we may still carry out our pious desires to exercise true charity to Jesus Christ in the person of the poor and the needy: for in administering to them, we are administering to Christ Himself. "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." We read in the lives of the saints how sometimes our Lord has actually manifested this truth in miraculous ways, as, for instance, in the case of St. Martin who, having cut his martial cloak in two, so as to be able to use half of it to clothe a naked beggar, who implored his help, was rewarded by a glorious vision of our Blessed Lord wearing the very garment which St. Martin had bestowed upon Him

in the person of the beggar. Surely, to know that Jesus accepts the alms we bestow upon the poor, just as though they had been bestowed upon Himself personally, should be enough and more than enough to fill our hearts with love and compassion for all our indigent brethren, and to make us exceedingly generous in their regard.

But let us pass on to yet another strong motive urging us to fulfil God's command to love our neighbor as He has loved us. This motive is contained in yet another promise made by the infallible lips of Jesus Christ, when He solemnly declared that "in whatsoever measure we have meted out to others, in that same measure it shall be meted out to us." That is to say, we shall reap according as we sow: so that the more openhanded and liberal we are, the greater and the more munificent will be our recompense. In a word, Christ promises to deal with us, as we deal with others. Now this should be a source of the greatest consolation and encouragement, for it affords us a means of allaying all serious apprehension as regards our future and the judgment that awaits us beyond the grave.

Do we not sometimes experience a great fear when we think seriously of death and the terrible account we shall have to render? Especially, if we are conscious of serious sin, and are not quite so certain of the sincerity of our repentence, nor of the adequacy of our satisfaction. Do we not ask ourselves, "How dare I face my omnipotent Judge? How will He receive me? What will be His attitude of mind. Will He, whom I have so often offended, be severe and rigid and exacting? Or will He deal gently with me, and temper justice with mercy?"

The answer God seems to give us is, "It depends upon yourselves," He seems to say: "Though I be the omnipotent Judge, yet I will allow Myself to be guided by your own conduct towards others. I will deal with you, as you are in the habit of dealing with your neighbors and acquaintances. If you are char-

itable, forgiving, compassionate, and ready to put a favorable interpretation upon the sayings and doings of others, I will be compassionate and considerate and gentle with you. But if you are hard and rigid and ready to find fault and to think evil in your hearts, I will be severe and rigorous and exacting with you." Or, to express the same principle in other words: "in whatsoever measure you measure out to others, *in that same measure* it shall be measured out to you again." Thus, your fate, my brethren, is left within your own hands; you have only to be to others what you would wish the infinite Judge to be to you. "Mercy to him, who showeth mercy, but justice and no mercy to him that showeth not mercy." In order to impress this truth upon us more indelibly, our Divine Master was not satisfied with enunciating it in simple words, but He also sat before His hearers a most striking parable in illustration. Thus, He represents Himself as a great Lord who began to take account of his servants. Now one of these owed him ten thousand talents: but since he had squandered or at all events spent the better part of that enormous sum, he was quite unable to pay. So his lord commanded that he should be cast into prison, and that his wife and his children and all that he had should be sold so that the debt should, as far as possible, be paid. But the servant, knowing the kindness and compassion of his master, threw himself on his knees and emplored him to have patience and to give him more time, so that he might be able to gather together by his industry and labor the sum that was owing. Did the Lord heed his cry for mercy? Yes. The servant rightly judged him to be a most indulgent master, full of mercy and compassion. In fact, he did far more than he was asked. In an excess of benevolence he forgave him all his debt, and sent him away rejoicing exceedingly at being thus graciously freed so easily from a most crushing and insupportable burden. Thus, all would have ended well but for one unfortunate incident that immediately fol-

lowed. The servant, instead of being impressed by his Lord's generosity, and instead of learning the lesson and being determined to imitate it, and to follow in practice the example of compassion and charity which he had just been taught in so striking a manner, remained quite as obdurate and as exacting as ever. For, meeting a fellow servant, who owed him, not indeed ten thousand talents, but a miserable hundred pence, he forthwith accosted him and demanded instant payment. Here, too, the debtor cast himself down before his fellow servant, and besought him to have pity and to exercise a little patience. But he would not. On the contrary. He laid violent hands on him, and throttling him, cried: "Pay what thou owest." But as this was impossible, since he had not the means, the heartless creditor went and cast him into prison till he paid all the debt." (Matt. xviii. 30.)

Here we note the contrast between the extraordinary liberality and boundless love of the great Lord for his humble subordinate, on the one hand, and the hateful niggardliness and cruelty of the servant towards one of his own equals, on the other. But the important part of the lesson conveyed in the parable has yet to come. Some of the other servants seeing what was done, were much grieved and disgusted, so that they came and told their master all that had happened. He was naturally extremely indignant and summoned the heartless man before him and reproached him severely for his conduct. "O! Thou wicked servant," He exclaimed, "I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me. Shouldst not thou then have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his Lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt." (Matt. xviii. 31-35.) Then our Lord adds these warning words: "So also shall my heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." In this parable the Master represents God, and the servant represents

the sinner, *i. e.*, you and me. By reason of our many sins we owe God a debt which none of us can fully repay. This colossal debt, represented by ten thousand talents, equally to several millions of our money, is wholly beyond our means. But God is infinite in mercy. He lets us off the debt; or rather he pays it Himself by His passion and death: and so frees us from the awful penalties that awaited us. But He wishes us to imitate His goodness and to walk in His footsteps. If we expect Him to forgive us, we must be ready to forgive others. In fact, He will not continue to exercise His infinite mercy towards us unless we, in our turn, exercise mercy towards others. He has even taught us in the Our Father to ask for forgiveness, not absolutely, not unconditionally, but according to the measure in which we forgive our fellows. "Forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive* them who trespass against us." If we withhold pardon from those who have offended us or who have done us an injury, then, every time we repeat the *Pater Noster,* we are beseeching God to withhold pardon from ourselves, and, as it were, signing our own condemnation.

Many more considerations might be added, but enough has been said to convince us not only of the supreme importance, but also of the immense advantages of exercising brotherly love on every occasion.

Time is passing away; the years are hastening by and we shall soon be called upon to stand alone before the dreadful judgment seat of God. On His decision hangs our eternal fate. Hell or Heaven tremble in the balance. What will give us courage, what will inspire us with hope and even confidence in that dread hour? Surely, it will be the consciousness that we have loved the brethren, that we have helped them in their needs, sympathized with them in their sorrows, cheered them in their sufferings, and befriended them in their misfortunes, their solitude and their loneliness. We shall be buoyed up by the divine assurance that our pity and compassion, our tenderness and

consideration toward others will be reflected in the sacred Heart of the Infinite Judge; and that He will be merciful to us, even as we have been merciful to others, according to the text: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Let us examine ourselves upon these points, and resolve from this very hour to lead lives more conformable to the teaching and to the whole character of Christ. We will conclude our discourse with the exhortation of St. Paul to the Ephesians: "Be ye followers of God, as most dear children. And walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness." (v. 1 and 2.)

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Happiness of a Virtuous Life

Text:—"You received the Gospel in much tribulation, (but) with joy of the Holy Ghost."—(*From the Epistle of the day.*)

MAN is naturally and almost necessarily affected by his environment. As he is called to work out his salvation in a sinful world, and to move continually among all sorts and conditions of men, he runs grave risks of accepting their false judgments and of adopting, often almost unconsciously, their erroneous views.

Now, this is not only a great misfortune in itself. It is also very likely to prove a sad hindrance to spiritual progress. And this because our life and conduct are so largely controlled by our views and opinions.

Let me set before you to-day one of those mischievous opinions as a specimen. In the first place, we will point out its intrinsic falseness, and then some of the disastrous effects following from it. As a consequence of living in the world and hearing worldly men talk about such things, many ordinary Catholics have come to believe that a good and religious life is a very dreary and a very sad one. Of course, they will hold, as every Catholic must, that there is a grave obligation to aim at holiness, and that their salvation depends upon their behaving themselves and keeping the commandments. But while accepting this doctrine, they regard it as sadly interfering with their happiness, and as a painful necessity. They obey, more or less readily, but, at the same time they persuade themselves that it is very hard, and that it would be very much pleasanter to follow their own sweet will and to indulge, to the full, their unruly passions and vi-

cious inclinations. They bring before their imagination the lives of non-Catholic friends or acquaintances: men and women who never trouble themselves about religious observances, who acknowledge no spiritual obligations; who neither fast nor abstain, and who never confess their sins or assist at Mass. And as they study the easy going condition of these unbelievers and worldlings, they fancy that they must be so much happier than they are themselves. They flatter themselves that these friends enjoy a freedom and a latitude that must make life uncommonly pleasant, and agreeable, and they quite envy them their supposed happiness. They know, of course, that such a life is condemned by God, and that their friends are walking along the broad road that leads to eternal death. And, therefore, through sheer fear, they may still persevere in their good resolutions, in spite of the attraction held forth to them. But still they seem to say, as they contemplate the life of the impious, "I know it is very naughty, but then it is so very, very nice."

On the other hand, they will set before their mind's eye the career of some great saint. It presents itself before their imaginations, as a life of constant and appalling suffering, self-denial and humiliation, and quite devoid of all consolation. Tney readily persuade themselves that any one attempting to follow such a life must be utterly miserable and wretched, and that he can have no real joy or consolation in this world. Then they contrast him with the worldling, who always follows his own bent, who gives full rein to his passions, who denies himself in nothing, and does just what he feels inclined to do at the moment. And they rest perfectly satisfied that the latter lives a life of supreme delight, and the former one of the greatest misery.

In a word, they fully accept the view that, so far as this world is concerned, a thoroughly dissipated life is a happy one, and a strictly religious life a very unhappy one. And, because they are imbued with this

view they take no pains to live up to the true standard set by Christ, and to tread the path of perfection.

Now, the important and practical question before us is this: Is a holy life in very truth either an unhappy or a dismal one? And is a sinful life, even so far as this world goes, a truly happy one? To both questions I give an unqualified and a most emphatic denial.

The fact is that any one who ventures to assert, what is here denied, is judging by external appearances, which are never reliable, and is relying on data, which are extremely deceptive. Happiness is a quality of the mind or soul, and a most subtle thing. And the secret sources from which it springs are often quite hidden away from the casual observer. Few are willing or even able to probe beneath the surface, and to sound the depths of the human heart; but any one who takes the trouble to consider the matter carefully, and to diagnose the mind of the saint and of the sinner, will unquestionably find that the saint has immeasurably the best of it in both worlds. The honest, upright and virtuous man is not only far surer of the supreme delights of Heaven, but he is also sure of a far truer and deeper happiness even here upon earth.

Let us now proceed to examine the point, quite dispassionately for ourselves. We shall then find that it costs a man far more trouble and distress to damn himself than to save himself. Let us begin by considering the general question of earthly trials and sufferings. Now, it stands to reason that all men, whether they wish it or no, have to suffer more or less and to bear the ills of life, but the wicked suffer much more severely than the good, because they have to bear their trials without consolation and without hope. They know nothing of the sweet peace of a good conscience, but are left in a state of continual anxiety and agitation, never daring to look within or to reflect; but continually upbraided by the secret reproaches of their own uneasy consciences.

If there were no other reason but this one for lead-

ing a Christian life, namely because by so doing we escape the remorse which tears and torments the libertine and the unbeliever, it would almost suffice. But let us consider the position more closely, and we shall discover many others.

In the second place, then, let us call to mind the various duties and obligations which bind the devout Christian, but which the libertine disregards; and then let us ask ourselves whether their loyal acceptance or their utter rejection brings most happiness.

Our most pressing duty is to avoid sin and all occasions of sin. Of course, this is painful to poor, corrupt human nature, and may envolve many sacrifices. It is a check upon our liberty, and calls for some self-restraint. This we readily admit. But, let me ask, does it cost nothing to our reason and to our innate sense of justice to deliberately offend a God of infinite power, who holds in His hands the keys of Heaven and of hell? Is not a brief moment of unclean pleasure very dearly bought, when it is followed by fear of God's judgments and inevitable regrets? Yet this is the case so long as a vestige of faith remains? On the other hand, what a joy to have gained a victory over a base and dangerous foe, and to have secured a peace so delicious as that which arises from the sense of duty done, and of a conscience preserved unsullied. Is it not preferable to a passing moment of impure indulgence? To fall is to cut ourselves off from God, whereas to stand firm is to draw nearer to God, and to put ourselves in a position to unite ourselves with Him, by prayer and the Sacraments, and that is actually felt to be a privilege by every faithful soul. On the other hand, the guilty man dare not appear before his outraged Master, and all the duties of piety become for him a constraint and a punishment. Hence, he who resolves to avoid sin and the occasions of sin, secures truer happiness, even in the present life, than one who makes up his mind to yield to the temptation.

Another obligation laid upon us by God, and which is accepted by the good, but rejected by the profligate,

is to mortify our evil passions. At first glance, this may appear to be an intolerable hardship. Yet, in sober truth, it will be found immeasurably more painful, in the long run, to become the impotent slaves of our passions, than bravely to overcome them. If we will look at the matter as revealed by history and experience, shall we not candidly acknowledge that all our passions are, in themselves, tyrants and cruel executioners? Once they are admitted into the citadel of the soul, they disturb its peace, give it no rest, and excite within it an insatiable hunger. Attempts may be made to appease this hunger by yielding to it. But instead of appeasing it, one inflames it yet more, so that it grows stronger and torments the sinner with yet increased vehemence.

Just consider the ambitious, the avaricious, the voluptuous! Even if no obstacle arises to interfere with their desires—which rarely happens—are they really happy? Is true happiness so much as possible for them? Does not the free indulgence of passion lead to appalling consequences, which even the world is constrained to denounce and condemn? Has the drunkard, the debauchee, the adulterer, the profligate lost nothing of his independence and of his freedom of action? Is he still as truly his own master as in the days of his innocence? Does he command the same respect? Do honest men regard him with as friendly an eye? Will they still seek his company and invite him to their circle as an honored guest? Will he even feel the same esteem for himself that he did before he became the slave of vice? Or will he not inwardly curse his own folly, and loathe his very weakness, in yielding to his disgraceful and besetting sin?

Just compare, in all fairness, either by the light of religion or even of mere reason, the state of a man, who is an abandoned slave to his worst passions, with another, who wages a continual and successful war with them, and who ends by becoming their master, and then you will feel constrained to confess that our Divine Lord, in commanding this war, is consulting

our true happiness, not only in the next world, but likewise even in this.

The third grave duty incumbent upon the practical Catholic is to prefer the soul to the body; in other words, to place his spiritual interests above his merely temporal ones. This most necessary obligation may be a source of considerable difficulty, at all events in the beginning of our conversion, because we are still very animal, and because the body is incessantly striving to draw the soul down to its own level. Man is in part animal, and in part spiritual. The lower, or animal, is always striving to have its way, and cares nothing for the more spiritual aspirations of the soul. It would lead a purely animal life. It would (like other animals) seek only the gratification of its appetites. Its happiness would be sought in the unrestrained indulgence of the flesh. Like the rich man in the Gospel, it would clothe itself in purple and fine linen, and feed most sumptuously every day, in complete forgetfulness of God and of its duty to its neighbor. And, like Dives, it would prepare for itself and for the soul that ought to rule and control it, the same dreadful and eternal punishment. Hence, God commands us to refuse the body much that it demands. He bids us exercise a mastery over it, and to keep it in subjection. This most necessary command is spurned by the profligate, because it is distasteful to him; the virtuous man, on the other hand, courageously strives to carry it out. The question we have to ask ourselves is: which suffers the more in the process? There can be no doubt but that the obedient servant of God will derive far truer happiness, even in this world, by reason of his mastery over his lower nature, than the self-seeking sinner who refuses all restraint.

It would be hard to find a more despicable creature than one who is always pampering his miserable and corruptible body. It is a tyrant, which is never content. So soon as we grant it one thing, it demands another. At last this constant yielding to its wants and this nervous anxiety to ward off everything that

might inconvenience it, becomes a veritable torment. On the other hand, is there any exercise of authority more worthy of a rational creature than that of keeping the body in its proper place, and forcing it to be content with what is requisite, and obliging it to submit to labor and hardship? Is it not a positive gain to feel that we may disregrad its importunities, and that we may bestow the whole of our attention on the far more deserving claims of religion and philanthropy. The man who has learned how to free himself from the bondage of the body and its sensual appetites enjoys a liberty to which other men are absolute strangers.

The fourth duty laid upon the faithful servant of God is to bear, with readiness and resignation, all the crosses, afflictions and trials which are laid upon him by the Providence of God. We must bear in mind that the wicked, no less than the good, have to suffer pains and troubles and losses and disappointments and annoyances of various kinds. But there is a striking difference in the effects produced. However bitter the crosses may be in themselves, a good Christian will sweeten them all by his patience, his resignation and his perfect submission to the holy will of God. He will see in them a valuable opportunity of atoning for past sin, exercising fresh virtue, and acquiring additional merit, and of laying up for himself inestimable treasures in the kingdom of Heaven. Thus, furnished with these and other similar motives, he will accept his misfortunes, not only with a tranquil heart, but even with a holy joy. It is far otherwise in the case of those who are in rebellion against God. They at once give way to sadness and depression and despair; and add immeasurably to the weight of their burdens by the sullen and unwilling spirit with which they receive them.

In these and in countless other ways the true and faithful child of God will be found to enjoy a degree of solid happiness and content, amid all his trials, absolutely unknown to the self-willed sinner, who

studies nothing but his own ease and comfort. By a faithful correspondence with God's grace, and a cheerful obedience to God's law, the earnest Catholic keeps far from him all that can disturb his peace of soul, and all that can cloud his interior happiness and content. On the other hand, the faithless sinner, by refusing to keep the few simple commands of God, breaks down the barriers that would safeguard his soul from destruction, and opens wide the door to all his spiritual enemies, who wreck their vengeance upon him, and fill his very heart's core with bitterness and disgust.

Before concluding we would like to draw attention to yet another advantage that the good possess over the bad. We refer to that delightful sense of true liberty, though this must be possessed to be thoroughly understood.

It is, of course, true that worldly people, who live according to their desires, and who deny themselves in nothing, *appear* to enjoy great fredom, but this is far from being the case, in reality. In an incredibly short time they become the helpless bondsmen of their passions, which tyrannize over them, like a pitiless task master, and allow them no rest. While they are sensible of the disgrace and the shamefulness of their conduct, they feel utterly incapable of freeing themselves from the thraldom of their evil habits, which have become a second nature, and which hold them in hopeless bondage. This is a truth which they themselves are often constrained to confess. But, even when they would fain deny it, their very conduct and manner of life prove it to be too true. When a man yields himself up without restraint to his passions, those passions soon drive him much further than he ever intended to go. They cling to him as the boa-constrictor to its victim, hold him as in an iron vice, and force him to do what in his heart of hearts he really condemns and detests.

On the other hand, the greater the saint, the greater the freedom which he enjoys. And every fall to a lower state is accompanied by some loss or dimuni-

tion of this divine prerogative. Even Catholics, who have lost their first fervor and have become remiss and lax in the practice of their religion, will be found to have forfeited some of their glorious liberty. Hence, the occasions of sin succeed in drawing them away; they are ready to yield to the least temptation; and human respect checks their highest impulses. They wish to do good, yet allow a thousand trivial obstacles to stand in their way; and though they heartily detest sin in their calmer moments, they cannot pluck up courage enough to put it away from them. Hence, it is quite evident, that such weak Christians enjoy no true liberty, for they can neither do the good they wish to do, nor abstain from doing the evil which they abhor.

There are some who imagine that liberty consists in the faculty of doing evil; in the power of committing sin. But this is a profound mistake. The power to fall is, in reality, no power at all, but a defect inherent in the creature due to his being drawn from nothingness. Such an unhappy defect is, in itself, so wholly contrary to true liberty that God, the most absolutely free of all beings, is wholly and utterly incapable of sin. This possibility in man is a terrible defect arising from his weakness, his blindness, and the limitations of his finite nature, and continues to be a constant source of danger so long as he is in this world.

Then, how must man strengthen himself against the weakness of his fallen nature? He must trust, not to himself, but to the all-powerful protection of divine Omnipotence. He must implore of Almighty God to safeguard and direct him. He must harken to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost within his soul; and he must learn to abandon himself as far as possible to the divine will. If he perseveres, he will find a change coming over him. He will judge things as God judges them, and will wish only what God wishes, and so will guard himself from all bad use of his liberty. In fact, the absolutely perfect liberty enjoyed by God becomes,

in some sort, his own, because he acts no longer in obedience to his own unruly inclination, but solely as he is guided and led by the holy Will of God. He wishes whatever God wishes, and God's wishes are always accomplished, so his will is always done, and he is ever content.

But, perhaps some of you will object that this voluntary subjection of our own will to the Will of God is a great and terrible constraint. It certainly should not be so; but if it be, it is wholly due to our natural inclination to evil, to our bad habits (which have become a second nature), and to that hateful spirit of pride, which brought about the fall of the Angels as well as of our first parents. But, whether painful or not, this constraint is necessary and in fact an essential condition of salvation, and therefore must be accepted. But bear this consoling truth in mind: this constraint lasts only a short time. Only until our evil passions are crushed, our self-love conquered, and our pride trampled under foot. So soon as our selfish and worldly inclinations are changed by regular suppression and persevering discipline into a genuine inclination toward all that is good and virtuous; in other words, so soon as the voice of divine grace grows stronger than the voice of corrupt nature, the constraint and the difficulty disappears, and we enjoy a profound peace.

This happy moment will come to all those who have spent some time in generous efforts to overcome themselves. They will grow conscious of its presence so soon as they have, by the divine assistance, acquired a command over their senses, over their imaginations, and over those first and irregular impulses which often carry us away in spite of ourselves. Then we begin to experience a sense of true and perfect freedom. Then we begin to taste, in all its ineffable sweetness, the true liberty of the children of God. Then we are filled with the deepest pity and commiseration for the poor, miserable slaves of the world, and with the most heartfelt gratitude to God, who

has enabled us to loosen and cast off its galling chains.

Like a spectator, standing on the solid rock, we contemplate them tossed about helplessly on the angry waves, driven hither and thither by a hundred contrary winds, and threatened at every moment to be engulfed by the howling tempest. We, on the other hand, are in the enjoyment of a profound calm. We are complete masters of our actions and able to follow the dictates of our conscience. No temptation to ambition, to avarice, to sensuality can exercise any tyranny over us. No glamor of human respect can cast its spell upon us. No longer are we disturbed or troubled by the cruel judgments of men, or by their raillery and contempt. Even adversities, humiliations and crosses have ceased to disturb our peace, and to inspire us with dread. In short, we have been lifted above the world and neither its blame nor its praise, its approval or its resentment is any longer able to exercise any control over us. Now, if that is not to be FREE INDEED, we may well ask what is Freedom?

We might add many other considerations did time permit, but enough has been said to make it clear that, in spite of appearances, a truly holy life is immeasurably more full of consolation and of genuine and startling happiness than a life of sin and self-indulgence; and that in order to secure the very highest and truest peace and content in this world, no less than in the next, we must walk along the narrow road of the commandments; we must learn how to take up our cross daily; and we must resolutely follow Christ and imitate His virtues.

If we only succeed in doing this we shall soon come to understand the full meaning of the words of St. Paul, which I have taken for my text. "You received the Gospel," he writes, "in much tribulation." That is to say, your first attempts to follow the teaching of Christ, which entailed many sacrifices and many acts of self-denial, were difficult and arduous

and caused "much tribulation." But they were accompanied by such grace and such help from on high that you soon learned to find your true happiness in the service of Christ, and in the control of your own corrupt nature, so that, in spite of your trials, you received the Gospel "with joy of the Holy Ghost." And this joy is so deep and so thorough that it surpasses all the trnsitory joy of this world, and is at the same time a joy which you may indeed forfeit by your own carelessness, but which no man can ever take from you.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

Is There a Hereafter?

Text:—"When evening was come, the Lord of the vineyard said to his steward, call the laborers and pay them their hire."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

WE are all laborers, my dear brethren, in the great vineyard of the Lord. And we are encouraged to work manfully and to endure every trial and hardship with the utmost resignation and patience, because of the magnificent reward that God has in store for us when "the evening" of life has come and we are called into His sacred presence.

But is there really any recompense awaiting us in another world? Is there in very truth another world? There are some who have the hardihood to question this, as they question the existence of God Himself and all things else. So let us take this point as the subject of this morning's discourse. Surely it will not be devoid of interest, for of all grave questions that can occupy the human mind there is none so important in itself, or so far reaching in its consequences as the question of a hereafter. Am I mortal or immortal? For me that is the question of questions—the one point to be settled before any other can be discussed. Am I like the flower, that blooms, then falls and fades forever? Or am I like an impregnable rock set in the midst of an ebbing sea, that stands itself unmoved, while all else is passing by? Does death, that destroys my fleshy envelope, destroy me? Does death's sharp dart that kills the body, pierce also the soul? I look into the future. I ponder on the eternal years. And as I am borne along on the wings of thought into periods too distant to be realized, too vast to be measured, I ask myself: shall I still be living? Thinking? Conscious still? Shall I remain, when earth, and all earth holds, has been swept away?

Shall I live on through fall of stars, and crash of worlds, and the general destruction that awaits all material things; or is death an extinguisher, that puts out the brief flame of consciousness forever? If this world were the only theatre of human life, and if nothing were to be looked for beyond it, the whole plan and basis of conduct would have to be reconstructed, and not only reconstructed, but reconstructed on totally different lines. Yes. Blot out all hope of a future, and the present loses all significance. Life assumes a different aspect, and its richest and brightest colors fade from the landscape. Whether man be borne to spend an eternity with God, or only to struggle for a few years, and then cease to be, are questions, the answers to which must determine the whole current of events.

Fortunately there is no room for doubt. In spite of the musings of certain modern materialists it is certain that man's soul shall never die. In fact, that man is made to survive the dissolution of his body is not only the most certain teaching of revelation, but it is so bound up and interwoven with thought and action and motive and conduct, that we can not remove the doctrine even in thought, without seeing the whole social fabric totter and fall to pieces, like a pack of cards.

Indeed, the strength of the Christian position, as regards an existence beyond the tomb, depends not so much on any one special proof, taken singly, however certain and sufficient it may be, as upon the accumulation of numberless proofs, all supporting and confirming one another, and creating a certainty, which is irresistible to the mind that calmly contemplates them. The hawser that holds the gigantic liner safely to the shore is composed of hundreds of minute threads of flax or hemp. No one of these, if taken singly, could hold so much as one of her loose planks or spars, but their united strength will arrest the entire ship. So it is with regard to the conjoint proofs establishing belief in a future life. Men may call in ques-

tion this or that particular argument, or deem it inconclusive; but when all the proofs are focussed and united, they leave no doubt upon the inquiring mind.

We believe in God. All nature proclaims His existence. It is only the fool who says "there is no God," and even he says so, only "in his heart," and not in his mind. It is the verdict of his rebellious will, which would be free from all restraint, not his sober reason. But if God exists, then a future life must also exist. Why? Firstly, because God has clearly declared this truth. "The just shall go into everlasting glory, and the wicked into everlasting punishment." He clearly and repeatedly refers to another life, when this life is over. We are to "sit at His table" to "enter into His joy," to be "satiated with the abundance of His house," and to experience a condition of happiness, such as "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor mind conceived." In these and in many other passages God declares, directly or by implication, that there is to be a life beyond the tomb, of which our present life is but the preamble and the preparation.

Nor is this all. Our sense of justice and equity demands it. The world we live in presents a strange picture to all who contemplate it. Its seething populations are composed of all sorts and conditions of men; differing as widely from one another in character and disposition as the fishes of the sea differ from one another, in size and form. The good and the wicked; the just and the unjust; the pure and the impure, mingle together in an almost inextinguishable mass; and, while evil is often exalted and crowned with honor, goodness is as often turned out of doors into the cold, and trodden under foot.

However imperfect and limited may be our acquaintance with the world, we know enough to make us keenly conscious that evenhanded justice does not preside over the destinies of men, and that few receive their due, whether it be of reward or of punishment. Our whole sense of equity and fairness revolts at the scenes that both past history and present expe-

rience unfold before us. We contemplate brute strength tyrannizing over weakness, fraud and cunning triumphing over honesty and truth; and lust and greed and ambition occupying the seats of honor in the world. The early Christian martyrs were torn and rent by the fierce beasts in the public amphitheaters to afford a spectacle to dissolute and heartless pagans; noble confessors of Christ were racked and tortured and done to death, because they loved honor and truth better than life; missioners and apostolic men, who have left home and fatherland out of a pure love for souls, and an ardent desire to extend the empire of truth, have received insult for their recompense, and death for their reward! Indeed, innocence and virtue are so sure of provoking enmity and opposition, that it has become a proverb among men, as well as an inspired assurance of Holy Scripture, that all "those who will live godly, suffer persecution."

But is evil to triumph always? Are the holy and the spotless to be forever trodden under foot? Are the swords and bayonets of unchristian governments to be forever bared, to drive out defenceless religious and God-fearing priests? Will the tide of iniquity never turn? Is there no justice in Heaven, no care or solicitude in the heart of God, for His own? Is there no glorious resurrection awaiting the myriads who are scourged and crucified by an impious world? Perish the thought! As sure as there is a God in Heaven, so sure is it that justice will be done; the wicked punished, the just rewarded. This hope, yea, rather let me say this conviction, can not be realized here, then it must be hereafter; if not in time, then in eternity. Our conscience tells us as clearly as the words of Holy Writ, that "God will judge every man according to his works," and that He will hold the balance in His hands, and apportion to each individual his appropriate reward or punishment. It is this that we calmly await and confidently expect, knowing that though the world may tyrannize and run riot, yet "the truth of the Lord endureth forever."

Undoubtedly justice demands a future state, in which the present inequalities shall be adjusted, and in which evil doers shall be duly punished. No one believing in an infinitely powerful and in an infinitely wise God, can suppose that He will allow the holy and the loyal to remain forever unavenged, or the violators of every law and the perpetrators of every crime and infamy to go altogether unpunished. If we exercise patience now, if we witness the triumph of evil and the trials of the just, with some equanimity and without losing our peace of mind, it is simply because we look forward with unswerving trust to a day when each will stand before an impartial and irresistible Judge, who will suffer no single act of evil to go unpunished, just as He will allow no single deed of virtue to remain unrewarded.

This conviction, which is implanted within the uttermost recesses of the soul, points clearly to a life beyond the tomb, and forms one of the strands of that irresistible cord which binds this truth to our minds.

But there are other phenomena which can be explained and accounted for only on the theory that another life follows on the heels of this. I refer especially to the intercourse which actually subsists between this world and the next. No one who has seriously examined the question will have the hardihood to deny reality to every vision and apparition that has ever been recorded; yet, even though but one were true, that one would suffice to refute the idea that at death all consciousness ceases.

Search the most sacred and best authenticated records, and we shall meet innumerable instances of the dead appearing to the living. The Scriptures themselves are full of them; take, for instance, the account given by the Evangelist St. Matthew (chap. xvii), of the transfiguration. Not only did our Lord appear, raised in the air, and wholly transformed, so that His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as snow; but there were seen "talking with him Moses and Elias," the two great patriarchs, who dur-

ing their earthly career had worked such wonders among the chosen people of God.

Both Moses and Elias had lived their brief life on earth; but that was many centuries before the birth of Christ. During all these ages their bones had lain buried, and generations had come and gone, while little more than the bare memory of their names survived them. Yet now they appear again. Now they revisit, for a brief moment, the scenes of their former life, and are clearly seen and recognized holding intercourse with our blessed Lord. Here there is striking and unmistakable evidence that the dead still live, and that those who have passed beyond human observation, to the land of spirits, are still existing full of health and strength.

Think of the centuries that had rolled by, between the period when Pharao's daughter discovered the infant Moses in a cradle among the rushes, and the date at which the incarnate Son of God was born in the stable of Bethlehem. Yet during all these centuries the soul of the great leader of Israel was evidently fully conscious and palpitating with life.

But to such instances as these may be added countless others, recorded in the lives of the saints. Among the many thousands of those whose lives have been written, and whom the Chruch holds up to our veneration, there are few who have not had intercourse with the invisible world of departed souls. They have seen the forms and heard the voices of those who, years before, had passed away. Not only the Blessed Virgin, but St. Joseph, and St. Peter, and multitudes of others have appeared to men on earth and communicated with them in familiar language. Those who have been favored with such supernatural visions were persons of exceptional virtue and exceptional honesty. No one will dare to say that they were all either deceivers or deceived. Their united testimony, extending to all times and to almost all countries, can hardly be set aside or denied by even the most sceptical. These occurrences

have been too numerous, too circumstantial, too universal, and too remarkable in their effects, to be ascribed in every case to hallucination, fraud, or deceit. Yet, if it be granted that but one such apparition be genuine, it must be admitted that a life exists beyond the tomb, and that death that destroys the body has no power over the soul.

Another argument is founded upon the universal belief of all mankind. Not only the most highly civilized, but also the most illiterate and barbarous have clung to this belief. Among uncivilized tribes and savages the doctrine is often found disfigured by gross superstitions and false accretions, but it is clearly recognizable. They realize that the spirits of their ancestors are still abroad. They bury food and weapons with the corpses of their deceased relatives, that they may be nourished and armed on their passage to the nether world. They even invoke the spirits of the departed, and seek to appease their anger or to secure their friendship by gifts; they attempt to call them up, and profess, in many cases, to hold communication with them. In these and in many other ways they bear witness to the *universality of the belief in a future world,* to which the dead are transported. They have disfigured and marred this belief by surrounding it with innumerable absurdities and incongruous fables, but such accretions in no way interfere with the fact that they, like all other men, whether cultured or uncultured, whether savage or civilized, agree in the general statement that man does not wholly perish, and that the dread destroyer of the material organs has no power over the soul that uses them. Now what all men hold as certain, must repose upon some very solid foundation. The verdict of the entire race is undoubtedly true. Why? Because its very universality shows that it is ingrained in our very nature. And how did it establish itself there, but by the impress of Him, who created it, and made it what it is. As we all possess a consciousness of right and wrong, so we all possess a consciousness

of a future, when the dictates of this very conscience will be vindicated. To what purpose indeed would this inward monitor be given to us, if obedience and disobedience to its dictates resulted in the same annihilation. No; our conscience not only declares one act to be just and another to be unjust, but it warns us of the future consequences of any violation of its teaching, and points to a future retribution. Its very existence implies a future state in which the supreme Legislator will "render to every man according to his works."

Further, it may be observed, that the answers to prayers addressed to the saints, are wholly inexplicable, and indeed inconceivable, except on the supposition that they are still rejoicing somewhere in the presence of God. We are taught, not only to honor the glorious servants of God, but to seek their help and protection. We address our petitions to them, and innumerable are the favors that we receive from their hands in return. There is scarcely any devout Catholic, but has been made sensible, at one or another period of his life, of the power of their friendship; while the lives of the saints are full of the most remarkable instances of the succor they have received from such heavenly visitors, in times of peril and of trial. No one can read the accounts of St. Ignatius the Bishop, St. Polycarp, St. Perpetua, St. Cyprian, to take a few instances, without realizing that the departed have not ceased to be, but have only changed their environment.

This intercourse between the inhabitants of the present world and those of the next, so constantly alluded to in the biographies of holy men and women, affords additional testimony in support of our contention, while even the experiences of the so-called spiritualists, and others, who, in spite of ecclesiastical prohibitions and repeated denunciations, carry on unlawful communication with deceased friends—serves, in spite of its unlawfulness—to add at least some further weight to this dogma of the Church.

Another set of arguments come to us from the study of metaphysics. It has been clearly demonstrated by psychologists that the soul is a simple or indivisible substance; spiritual in its nature; and not intrinsically dependent on the body for its existence, or even for its action. Now, such a substance is incapable of corruption, either directly or indirectly. It is obviously incapable of corruption *directly,* since it is not made up of distinct parts, and can not therefore be resolved into anything else, as water, for instance, may be resolved into two gases. But it is likewise incapable of corruption or distribution even *indirectly,* for it does not intrinsically depend on the body for its being, as the whiteness of the snow-flakes depends upon the snow, and must vanish as soon as the particle in which it adheres is melted by the warmth. Hence the human soul can not come to an end in either of these ways.

From this it is apparent that its immortality is one of the consequences of its immateriality. Were the human intellect but a simple product of certain nervous processes, or a mere function of the gray matter of the brain (as has been foolishly alleged), then, of course, the dissolution of the organism would necessarily mean the total annihilation of the soul. But since sound philosophy proves this not to be the case, the soul must live on, after the organism has perished.

These are, however, considerations to which it is impossible to do justice, except in a lecture-room, and to students already versed in the subtleties of philosophy, and a preacher would justly be blamed for pedantry, who should do more than just point out in passing the existence of such proofs. To any among you, dear brethren, who may be interested in the metaphysical aspect of the momentous question, the ordinary recognized treatises lie ready and open, and may easily be consulted.

Taking, then, man's future life as sufficiently established, we will devote the short time remaining to us, to the consideration of a more practical and pressing question. We shall inquire whether we are making

as serious a preparation for that eternal future as it deserves.

The future that awaits us is eternal. In that one respect, at least, it is the same for all. But when we pass in review the precise state and condition of the individual soul, that has "entered into the house of its eternity," and contemplate its occupations, its aspirations, its feelings and emotions, the utmost discrimination must be exercised. "The just," says the Infinite Judge, "shall go into everlasting glory, and the wicked into everlasting punishment." But among both the just and the unjust, there exist innumerable degrees of holiness or of infamy. As there are different positions in God's kingdom—"in my Father's house there are many mansions," so there are also different positions in the region of the damned. As even those who are saved, will nevertheless differ from one another, even "as star differeth from star in glory," so, in like manner, will the lost differ from one another in the measure of their shame and in the intensity of their agony.

As no two human beings possess exactly the same form and cast of features, so there are probably no two in Heaven or in hell, whose lives on earth have quite corresponded, or who have merited precisely the same fate. In every sin, as well as in every act of virtue, there are circumstances and surroundings wholly personal and peculiar, which will differentiate every act of vice or virtue, from every other.

We must not then rest satisfied, dear brethren, to save our souls, nor flatter ourselves that we have done enough, when we have secured a place in our Father's home. We should rather dwell upon the fact that time is given that we may turn it to account, and that we must never cease to advance and to struggle forward, upward and onward, with persevering energy and resolution, so long, as life lasts.

Did we but realize the priceless value of every moment of time, we should be far more careful than we

are not to squander the flying minutes, each one of which is a seed, big with the promise of eternal fruit.

That we may all one day meet in God's heavenly Home above, is the greatest blessing I can wish you, in the name of the Father, etc.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

The Knowledge of the Things of God

Text:—"To you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest in Parables."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

"TO you," says our Blessed Lord, "it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God." To you it is given to KNOW. This wonderful gift of knowledge, to which our Lord refers, is indeed one of the greatest of all His gifts. All sciences are useful, but the science which treats of God and divine things is the greatest of them all. It is the science of sciences, and goes by the name of theology.

Now, theology is found stored up in countless musty folios and ponderous books in the libraries of universities, seminaries, colleges and schools. True. But it is also to be found outside these human institutions in the open country; in the mountains and valleys; in the seas and rivers; in the woods and forests. In fact, all nature is ever proclaiming and publishing the beauty and grandeur and power of God in a hundred thousand tongues, and bearing witness to His infinite goodness and wisdom.

And there is no lesson so valuable, so necessary or so delightful as the lesson that Nature teaches us when it lifts our minds up to that divine Being whose mere FIAT called all things into existence. For God is infinitely above all the works of His hands; the only self-subsisting, eternal and necessary Being. So immeasurably above all creatures indeed, that no attribute whatsoever, no, not even the attribute of existence itself can be predicated of any creature, in the sense in which it is predicated of God. No being "is," no being "exists" *in the sense in which God is;* in the sense in which God exists. God is the sole and absolute and inexhaustible source from which all things, whether visible or invisible, whether present or future,

whether actual or possible, have their rise; and all depend wholly upon Him. He is the cause of all: but is caused by none.

Hence, it is easy to see that to know God is our highest interest, and in fact, our very life. Our Lord intimated as much when addressing His heavenly Father, He said: "This is eternal life, that they may *know thee*, the only true God." (John xvii. 3.) And St. Paul, one of the most enlightened and gifted of all the saints that ever walked the earth, does but express a sentiment common to them all, when he boasts that he knows nothing "but Jesus Christ"—*i. e.*, God incarnate—"and him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.) On the other hand, the Holy Spirit assures us that: "All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God." (Wisdom xiii. 1.) In short, our supreme and essential delight and happiness throughout eternity (if, by God's grace, we are ever admitted into Heaven), will arise, and must arise from our knowledge of God, and from the study and contemplation of His divine perfections.

The full and complete knowledge of God is, of course, reserved for the next life, when we shall see Him, as the Scripture expresses it, "Face to face," and when we "shall know, even as we are known." But even now, and in our present state, it is absolutely necessary that we should be able to form at least some faint and imperfect idea of Him. The truth of this statement may easily be inferred from the fact that all supernatural virtue and all perfection consists in the love of God. Such love is indeed the measure of all sanctity. Our very salvation depends upon this love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart," etc., is the first and most essential of all the commandments. But it is impossible to love what we do not know. No object—whatsoever—no; not even the highest and the holiest, not even the infinitely beautiful and the uncreated good, can awaken within us the slightest glimmer of a desire, or stir up in our hearts the least initial feeling of affection, unless that

same beauty and goodness be presented in some form or another to the mind. *"Nihil volitum, nisi cognitum,"* is the old scholastic motto. *"Nothing is desired but what is known."* We shall not love God; we shall not desire God; nay, we shall not even fear Him, or care to serve Him, unless we contrive, in some measure, to know Him.

It is because this knoweldge is so essential that God deigns in His mercy to reveal Himself. There are five great revelations of God in this world. God reveals Himself *first* through our conscience, which gives us an intimate knowledge of Him as our law-giver and the director of our conduct: the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked. *Secondly,* God reveals Himself through the mystery of the Incarnation, speaking to us directly, and with His own divine lips, in the human nature which He assumed. *Thirdly,* God reveals Himself in the Holy Scriptures, wherein He addresses the world through His inspired prophets, seers, Apostles, and evangelists. *Fourthly,* He reveals Himself through His Spouse, the Catholic Church, whose infallible voice, ringing over the entire world, and throughout the centuries, bears witness to Him in all ages and in all countries.

In these four ways He reveals Himself to all Christians: to all those who have the gift of divine faith. But there is another, a *fifth* way in which He makes Himself known, not to Christians only, but to all men, even the most barbarous, the most depraved, the most neglected and uneducated, and that is through the visible creation; through physical and material objects that lie around in every direction.

The earth and the whole material universe serve as our temporary abode and dwelling place, and supply our corporal needs; but they have also a far higher and nobler purpose to fulfil. They have to speak to us of God, to reflect His divine attributes, and to proclaim His wisdom, His power, His goodness, and His beauty. Hence Isaias declares that "the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord." (Ch. xi. 9.) And

this is undeniable. Indeed, the visible creation, stretching out around us to endless distances upon every side, is like some sublime volume written and illustrated by the finger of God, in which day by day we can read and study and inform ourselves, more and more perfectly, concerning the nature and the character of Him who dwells in light inaccessible. By the things that are made, the invisible things of God are clearly seen, says St. Paul. (Rom. i. 20.) And "by the greatness of the beauty of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby," says the wise man. (Bk. of Wisdom xiii. 5.) That God reveals Himself throuh Nature is therefore clearly of faith. Indeed it has actually been defined by the Vatican Council that God may be known by reason: so that the Atheist, if such an abortion really exists, is without a valid excuse.

It is strange that so many should fail to realize the relation between the Creator and His works. It is strange that they should allow the long years of life to go by without ever rising from the contemplation of the visible and the material, to the contemplation of the invisible and the spiritual. I maintain that it is *strange,* for the simple reason that no analogous difficulty is experienced in detecting the relation existing between *human* artists and their works. If men can at once recognize the genius and ability of a human artist by gazing upon his works, why should they not by an analogous process learn something of the wisdom and power and goodness of the divine Artist by gazing upon His works?

Centuries have rolled away since Raphael plied his magic brush. Yet no one can stand and contemplate his priceless masterpieces, even at the present hour, without being made at once sensible of the consummate ability, the marvelous taste, the unapproachable skill, and artistic touch of the great Italian painter. Nor does the world confine itself to mere admiration of the pictures that he has bequeathed to it. No! It connects them most intimately with their author.

While its eyes are riveted upon the canvas, its thoughts are fastened on the painter. Men muse, and marvel as they muse, at the mind that conceived so sublime a design, and at the hand that so faultlessly guided the brush, until they can scarce contain themselves, and cry aloud: What a genius! What a painter! What power of conception! What unrivaled execution! and so forth.

It is the same when we stand spellbound before some splendid piece of architecture, such as a gorgeous palace, or some superb cathedral Here again, we, to some extent, gauge the ability and qualities of the man by means of his work. The beauty, the solidity, the symmetry, the grandeur, and the fair proportions of the building lifting its stately form before us seem to speak to us of the originator and the designer; seem to tell us much of his capacity and his mental gifts. It is, in fact—so far as it goes—a revelation of the man. If instead of painting and sculpture we take music or poetry, or science, it is all the same: for, whatever man applies his mind to, he impresses with some touch of his own personality, and lights up with some bright ray of his own native genius, so that, in studying man's works, we may in verv truth be said to be studying man himself.

Now, just as we can gain a knowledge of man through man's works, so can we gain a knowledge of God through God's works. In this way the material creation becomes a mirror reflecting its divine Fashioner, and a true revelation of the Creator Himself. God's works are countless in number and variety. Which of them shall we choose, just to illustrate our theme? One of the most interesting and beautiful is man himself. Then let us take man. What a truly marvelous creation he is! Set on one side, for the moment, the nobler part of his being, *viz.*, his soul and all its spiritual powers, and consider his lower and purely physical nature, namely, his body. Even here we can not but feel that we are touching a divine work. A picture by Raphael, or a statue by Michael

Angelo may certainly reveal some degree of power and skill. But what an immeasurably more wonderful thing we contemplate in the living, breathing, moving structure of the human form. What infinitely greater power, wisdom and skill it denotes in the supreme Artist who gave it being. What a stupendous work it is! How exquisitely fashioned! How faultlessly proportioned; how wondrously complicated, and yet how delicate and fragile, and how beautifully pieced together. Though consisting of an innumerable number of different parts, each distinct, yet all correlated, nevertheless there is no confusion, no antagonism, but the most perfect order and harmony. A typewriter or a phonograph is a very ingenious piece of mechanism, but it is but a rude and clumsy thing when compared to the human body. How came it to be? Who designed it? Who fashioned it? Perhaps we shall be told: "it was the mother." But is the mother the really efficient cause of the body of the child? Is it a fact that she has manufactured it, and given it being? In a sense, it may be true, but in a very limited and imperfect sense. The mother is merely the instrument—I might almost say the blind and unconscious instrument—in the hands of another. She is little more in the hands of God, producing the child, than the paint brush is in the hands of a Raphael or a Domenichino producing a picture. She is, in truth, but a tool; a tool wielded by an operator far greater, wiser, and more skilled than she is. So insignificant indeed is her share in the work that she does not herself even know how the human form is woven from her substance, even though she gives it birth. No! She can not unravel the mystery for us, nor can she explain how the substance of bone and muscle are wrought from the blood: how bone is knit together with bone, joint with joint, and nerve with nerve. She has no conception as to how each limb and organ is properly shaped, built up, and exquisitely finished. She has no knowledge whatever of the science of optics, yet her child possesses the most perfect

organs of sight. She has never studied acoustics, and is ignorant of its first principles. Yet see! Her child is provided with ears, as sensitive as possible to every vibration and responsive to every passing sound. And so is it likewise as regards all the other senses and organs of the body. Can all this be justly and truly described as her own work? The work of one who does not know! What! Has ignorance then grown so wise? O! How is it possible to explain the existence of even a single child without having recourse to an Artist and Organizer, immeasurably higher and wiser and more powerful than poor ignorant man. *How* is it possible? Brethren, it is not possible. The mind in contemplating even the puniest sleeping infant of a day old, is thrown back upon God as the only possible explanation.

We might press our investigation still further, and demand how the mother can, unaided and alone, construct that wonderful pneumatic pump, the heart, without any knowledge of pneumatics. How she contrives the constant and regular circulation of the blood; how she forms the organs of assimilation and nutrition, she who can neither explain nor even understand them. The more we reflect, the more clearly the truth is borne in upon us, that the mother is not the true source of human life, and that a higher and sublimer intelligence has watched over every operation, and controlled every movement, and has been the *real and only efficient cause* of the marvel, which we contemplate when we gaze with admiration on the sentient human body. The hand of God is clearly seen in this, His chief visible work. Yes. It is as evident in the formation of the human body as is the hand of man in the formation of a typewriter or a phonograph.

My brethren! Let us not be foolish, but realize and confess that no chance, no mere accident, no fortuitous concourse of atoms can possibly produce anything so beautiful, so well ordered, and so harmonious. To seek to put us off by such clumsy and childish explana-

tions is an insult to our common sense, and an outrage upon our reason. No! With the inspired Apostle we cry out: "By the visible things the invisible are rendered apparent," and the Creator is made manifest in the creature. "If man exists, then God exists," each one of us may justly exclaim with irrefragable logic. If I myself am, then clearly God must be. His existence is absolutely needed in order to explain mine own.

This of itself should be enough. But God's claims may be urged still more emphatically. Let us, just for argument's sake, admit an absurdity. Let us, provisionally feign to favor the view that a man's body is formed from and by his mother alone, without any reference to a Supreme Being. Even were we to grant this absurdity, it would be of little avail. It would scarcely help us out of the difficulty, since it merely removes it one step further back. For the primitive or *first* man would still have to be accounted for. Whence came the very first member of our race? One may, of course, go back in imagination from one generation to another. One may allow that A came from B; that B came from C; and that C came from D, and so on. But even along these lines we can not proceed very far. Science itself blocks the way. Science teaches that there was a period (it matters nothing how distant and remote) when the earth could not have possibly harbored man: a period extending over unnumbered thousands of years, during which the earth was a ball of liquid fire; when the heat was such that the hardest metals flowed over its agitated restless surface with the freedom of water. So intense was the heat that no creature of flesh and blood—had such existed—could have trodden its surface, or even approached within a thousand miles of it without being at once reduced to a cinder. Not only therefore does science tell us of a time when man did not exist anywhere upon the earth, but it points to a condition of things which would have made his existence impossible. To a time when life, such as ours, would have

been out of the question. Good. Then whence did life first arise? Two facts are laid down as certain by science itself. The first is that, once upon a time, it matters not when, MAN WAS NOT. The second fact is that now MAN IS. Then where did the *first* man spring from? How came he to be? Did he make himself? Did he start up suddenly out of the ground? Did he drop down, without warning, from the clouds? Did the wheels of chance, for ever turning and twisting at last, and little by little, grind him out? To argue thus, is to argue as a fool. But one answer is so much as possible to a reasonable person. God made man. Common, practical sense demands and insists upon an explanation that shall be at once reasonable and adequate, and none but this will suffice. Set aside God, and every other attempt to explain the facts lands us into an absurdity. Every other theory serves but to render more evident that we can not deny God without stultifying ourselves, doing violence to reason, and outraging common sense.

One of the first and most fundamental treatises of theology deals with the existence of God. Now that fact, as we have seen, is emblazoned upon the whole creation in clearer characters than in any book. It is the first great lesson taught us by the visible world around. As we have already observed, we can not account for our corporal existence without first postulating God's. And if the material body itself can not be accounted for, unless we admit the existence of the Supreme Fashioner and Creator, still less can we account for the soul itself, with all its spiritual gifts and faculties, unless we postulate the existence of this divine Being.

But we have no time to enter upon so lofty and so vast a theme. We will merely remark, therefore, that were we to extend our gaze yet further, and contemplate a yet vaster field, God's all presiding presence would become yet more keenly felt.

One of the first facts to strike the casual observer and to arrest attention is that order everywhere pre-

vails. There is order on earth. There is order in the heavens. Each bird, beast, insect, flower and plant exhibits law and order. And where order is conspicuous and unmistakable we must infer an Orderer. Again, all creatures are subject to law. Without law there would be neither beauty, nor symmetry, nor proportion, nor life—yet these characteristics are everywhere visible and perceptible. Whether with the botanist, we study the innermost structure and organic perfection of a plant or a flower; or whether with the astronomer we sweep the starlit heavens with our telescopes, we shall most certainly recognize the reign of law. And these laws imply a Law-giver; and Supreme Ruler. Yes; that law which holds within its iron grasp the entire universe, from the smallest floating mote, dancing in the sunbeam, to the vastest sun lost in the tremendous depths of space, demands a personal and intelligent cause, which we call God.

Thus we end as we began. Nature is a gigantic book, written by the hand of God, in which we may all read and learn more and more of Him, who is Lord and Master of all. May He give us grace to con its wonderful pages to our own spiritual profit, and may He enable us to interpret it aright, so that it may convey to us an ever increasing knowledge of His greatness, goodness, love and beauty, and fill us with an ever stronger love of Him, till the shadows pass, and we can see Him in the cloudless splendor of Heaven, there to rejoice with Him for ever and ever, and ever. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

Prayer

Text:—"He cried out, saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

THERE is hardly any duty of such vital importance as the duty of prayer. The Holy Spirit, in the inspired pages of the Bible, is ever urging us to this holy exercise. "We ought always to pray and not to faint." (Luke xviii. 1.) "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (Matt. xxvi. 41.) Sometimes the same idea is repeated in different forms, in order to arrest attention, and to add emphasis to the command. Thus our Divine Lord cries out: "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." (Matt. vii. 7.) "If any man," says St. James, "wants wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not." (Chap. i. 5.) In another place we read: "Be nothing solicitous, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be known to God." (Ph. iv. 6.)

These and countless similar passages, that might be quoted, should convince us that prayer is one of the chief duties incumbent upon every true Christian. And this will be all the more readily admitted if we consider the nature and grave responsibilities of our present state. Let us then call to mind that we are placed in this world, only for a short time, as in a place of trial, and that we have so to live that we may deserve one day to enter Heaven, and to share the life of God Himself. In the meantime we have innumerable difficulties to contend with, and innumerable obstactles to overcome before we can attain to our eternal Home above. Many and powerful enemies surround us, and are striving continually to lead us into sin that we may be damned with them. These

enemies are not only very numerous, but they are also subtle, cunning, pitiless and unscrupulous. How are we to withstand their assaults? How are we to overcome and defeat their malicious designs? It is quite certain that, of ourselves, we are no match for them and could never defeat them by virtue of our own strength. Left to ourselves, we would fall an easy prey to their insidious devices.

But, thanks be to God, we are not left to ourselves to become the sport of our enemies. We have only to lift up our voices to Heaven, and to call upon the name of God, and He has promised to rescue us from the hands of our most powerful and most dreaded foes. Without grace we are powerless. That is true; for our Lord says: "Without me you can do nothing." (John xv. 5.) And St. Paul reminds us that "we are not sufficient even to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." (2 Cor. iii. 5.) If therefore we were to be abandoned by God, we should have no chance whatever of ever reaching the Kingdom of Heaven and the beatitude of the saints. But, if, on the one hand it be true that without God we can do nothing, on the other hand, it is equally true, that with the divine assistance we can do all things. "Call upon Me (He says) in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me." (Ps. xlix. 15.)

God is infinitely more powerful than all our enemies united, and can rescue us quite easily from every evil. But perhaps you will ask: Though He is always able, is He always willing to help us? We know that He is omnipotent, but will He use His omnipotence on our behalf whenever we invoke His holy name? Unquestionably. For we are His children, and He loves us more than any earthly parent. Can we imagine a devoted mother refusing to come to the aid of her own child when its life is threatened by a savage beast? Most certainly not. But even though a mother were to close her ears to the cry of her child, God will not close His ears to the cry of His children

when calling for help against their adversary the devil, whom St. Peter compares to "a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour."

But prayer is not only a sovereign protection against our enemies, and a secure defense against their fiercest and most prolonged assaults. It is also the great means of obtaining every grace and blessing that we may need, both in the natural and in the supernatural order. We are, alas! poor and weak and destitute and ignorant and blind and naked. We need light in order to see our way amid the dangers and snares and pitfalls that beset us upon every side. And, even after we have had the path of virtue clearly pointed out to us, we still require the strength and courage to follow it, since it is often rocky, difficult and precipitous. This grace can be acquired only by prayer. Nor is this all. Prayer is also like a golden key, with which we are able to unlock the Treasury of God, and secure for ourselves every grace. In response to our earnest and preserving solicitations our Divine Lord enables us to acquire humility, purity, honesty, charity and all other virtues that should adorn a Christian soul. When we reflect upon our misery and unworthiness we might be inclined to doubt the efficacy of our prayers. But, the solemn and repeated promises of our Lord Himself inspire us with confidence and give us the assurance of a favorable answer. "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you." (John xvi. 23.) And again, in another place, "All things whatsoever you ask, when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." (Mark xi. 24.)

Now let us put ourselves the momentous question, fair and square: Does God really always answer our prayers? Possibly our past experience may cause us to feel some hesitation. Possibly we may persuade ourselves that God has not quite always kept His promise. We may have asked sometimes and yet not obtained. We think God is not invariably ready to

listen to and to grant our petitions. But, my brethren, if this is our view, it is a false one, and clearly indicates that we have not fully understood the character of God, and that we have forgotten that "His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts." If you, my dear brethren, put me the question: "Does God always answer our prayers?" I reply, without the slightest hesitation: Yes; He does always answer our prayers if they are properly said; that is to say, if they are said with fitting attention, humility, confidence and charity. But, there are two cautions to be borne in mind. Consequently, though I do not hesitate to declare that God will answer our prayers, when properly said, yet I do *not* say that He will answer them always (1) *at once;* nor do I say that He will answer them (2) exactly *in the manner* that we expect.

To help us to understand the situation, we must carefully consider the totally different condition of God on the one hand, and of man on the other. Man is extremely ignorant. His knowledge is most imperfect. It is impossible for him to foresee the effects, even of his own conduct. Still less can he foretell the remote and ultimate consequences of the intricate and complicated play of will with will, and of force with force all around him. God, on the other hand, knows all things. He beholds the most distant future just as clearly as the present. He can tell the consequences, both immediate and remote of all that happens, just as if they had already taken place. He knows what will be to our permanent gain or to our permanent loss, and what will yield happiness, and what will yield misery, though it may be wholly hidden from us. We, on the contrary, may think this or that will be for our good; and yet we may be utterly deceived. Or we may persuade ourselves that some special object will bring us ruin or misery and, in reality, it may be the one thing requisite to our complete happiness. But, while the whole future is hidden from our eyes, God reads all its secrets as in a book.

Now remember this. Not only is God's knowledge perfect, but His love for us is as perfect as His knowledge. Hence, when He promises to answer our prayers, it must be always understood that He will do so only in such a way as will be profitable for us. If He promises to hear our prayers, it is in order that He may render us a service. Consequently, it often happens that He cannot answer our prayer *according to the actual terms of the petition,* because to do so would be detrimental to our true interests, and it is precisely our true interests that He wishes to further and to safeguard. It is not that He does not answer our prayer, it is rather that He answers (not the actual request, founded on our ignorance, but) the request which we would have put forward, had we known all that He knows.

The same principle holds good even amongst ourselves, wherever there is knowledge on one side, and ignorance on the other. A father, by reason of his superior knowledge, will often refuse the prayer of his child, whom he loves more than himself, if he realizes that to grant it would do the child serious harm. Will the most indulgent of mothers give the little one she is carrying in her arms through the summer woods the bright berries of the deadly nightshade, merely because it stretches out its hands for them, and cries out for them? Will the father allow his little son to play with his loaded pistol, or sharp sword, just because he begs and implores him? Certainly not. And why? Because their very love compels them to refuse a request fraught with such danger; and which would never be made if the child had any appreciation of the risk he is so anxious to run.

With a similar, though infinitely greater love, does God deal with us. An illustration or two will best convey our meaning. Here, then, let us contemplate a devoted mother praying for the recovery of her son. He is a youth of twenty or five and twenty years of age, and is dying of fever. The heart-broken parent throws herself upon her knees and implores God to

spare his life, and to restore him to health. But her tears fall in vain. Her burning words seem to be addressed to deaf ears. In spite of her pitiable cries, the disease runs its course; the son sinks into an early grave, and she is left alone in the house of mourning. If this mother be an indifferent Christian, she may murmur and complain, and accuse God of hardness and cruelty. She may even misjudge God, and exclaim, in her wrath, that there is no use praying, and that God does not keep his promises, to listen to His children when they call upon Him.

But the question is: Why does God not prolong the life of her son? No doubt, He has the very best of reasons. Indeed these reasons are so good that it is solely the ignorance of the mother that hinders her from rejoicing rather than complaining. Suppose God were to reveal the whole state of the case to the weeping mother. Suppose He gave her the power to look into the future and to follow that loved son during, let us say, the ten succeeding years. Her eyes are opened. As though in a vision, she is allowed to see her son rising from his bed of sickness; in course of time he grows quite strong. Then he is met by a severe temptation. He falls among evil companions. He commits sin. He breaks open his employer's till and robs him of fifty dollars. When the officers of the law come to apprehend him, he resists them. Finally he fells one of them to the ground. He has killed this officer while in the discharge of his duty. He is tried, and condemned to be hanged. While he is waiting in his cell for the hangman to come and pinion him, the vision closes and God asks the mother if she would rather that her son should now die good and innocent or live on a few more years to end as a thief and a murderer by a disgraceful death at the hands of the public hangman. There is no doubt as to what the mother's decision would be. She would implore God to take her beloved boy now, while he is sure of Heaven and its eternal joys. Thus, in this as in countless other cases, we may truly say that God has in very truth

heard her prayers; not the actual petition she presented in her ignorance, but the prayer she would have made, were she in possession of all the circumstances, as God is. Of course I am suggesting an extreme case in order to bring out the force of the argument. But even when far less is at stake we often ask what no one who really loves us would ever grant, if he could possibly help it; and what God most mercifully refuses us. The fact is we are perpetually praying to God for things which would do us harm, or interfere with our eternal salvation, and God, on the other hand, is constantly refusing these foolish prayers and bestowing upon us graces and favors which we would much rather have and esteem far higher, did we know all that He knows. Do not even the most devoted parents act on this same principle towards their children; and are we not all very little children and very ignorant children, as compared to Almighty God? Hence, if we are wise, we shall always ask God for things conditionally; that is to say, we shall ask Him to grant our prayer in so far as He sees it to be expedient and conducive to our truest interest. If we keep insisting on a thing without any resignation. If we grow impatient, and fix our hearts upon it, and are determined to have it, whether God is willing to grant it or no; God sometimes punishes our presumption by granting our request and allowing us thus actually to experience the result of our folly. A story is told of the famous Ruskin, which proves that even human beings will act in a similar manner. When quite a tiny boy, his nurse carried him into the breakfast room to see his mother. The child was at once attracted by a bright silver urn standing on the table, from which issued a hissing stream of scalding steam. The child stretched forward to press its tiny fingers against the polished silvery surface of the urn, but the nurse carefully held him back out of harm's way. But the little one was not to be denied, and cried and struggled violently to satisfy its whim. Even the mother, who tried to persuade her self-willed son to obey her command,

which was only for his good, tried and commanded in vain. He still struggled to reach and touch the urn of boiling water. At last the wise mother told the nurse to let this disobedient boy have his way. The result was he scalded his fingers, and there and then learned a lesson which impressed itself upon him for life. Ever after he felt that when a superior who is both wise and loving imposes a law, or refuses to grant a petition, it must be for some good and adequate reason. Whatever truth there may be in this principle, as applied to man, it most certainly holds good as regards Almighty God.

So again, God may often answer our prayers, but not in the manner asked for and expected. We have a very good example in the case of St. Paul. He tells us that he was at one time greatly molested by temptations contrary to the angelic virtue, so knowing his weakness, he implored God to remove them from him. His wish was, of course, to be kept free from sin. Now this God granted, but not in the way asked by St. Paul; not by removing the temptation; but by so helping and strengthening him as to secure him the victory. If carefully considered, we shall see that this was not only to answer his prayer, but it was to answer it in a higher and more perfect way; for, to triumph over temptation is far more advantageous than to be freed from it. The Apostle acquired merits by reason of his victory over himself, which never would have been his had the temptation itself been removed. In the second place we must bear in mind that God was about to bestow upon St. Paul great and singular honors. He was about to show him visions, and to raise him up to the third heavens, which might easily have filled him with pride, so it was important that he should be made to experience his own inherent weakness and frailty. He confesses this himself, saying: "*Lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me*, there was given to me a sting of the flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me." Who knows? Perhaps if God had removed the temptation so soon as St. Paul had asked, he might, like an-

other Lucifer, have fallen through pride and self-complacency. God always knows what is best for us, and though He may not do exactly what we ask, He will certainly do what He, in His wisdom, knows is much better and much more to our true interests, whether we are enlightened enough to recognize this truth or not.

Sometimes God grants our petitions, but not quite immediately. He often makes us wait and repeat our request again and again. Now, why is this? How are we to explain it? Well, we may as well begin by asking why God wishes us to ask at all? Is He not omniscient. Does He not know, far better than we can tell Him, what our needs are? Unquestionably. If, therefore, He insists upon our asking, it is not really on His account, but upon ours. He wishes us to realize that "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James i. 17), and that we owe all that we have and all that we are to His munificence. He wishes us to learn more and more clearly our utter dependence upon Him for everything, and that we can do nothing of ourselves. For, Alas! We are only too ready to forget this. We are prompt enough to use God's gifts, and to extract pleasure and amusement from them, but rarely do we refer them to Him as to their source. How seldom we pause to ask ourselves whence they come, and to whom we are indebted for them. Therefore, He commands us to pray; for, by prayer, we openly acknowledge Him to be the Author of our being, and the bestower of the gifts which we enjoy.

If He delays in answering, it is in order that we may show our trust and confidence by continuing and persevering. To present our petition, and then to turn aside because it is not granted at once, and to say there is no use asking for favors, is to show a great want of earnestness and a most lamentable coldness and indifference. Whereas, to continue asking and beseeching, even though nothing seems to come of it, shows not only that we are desperately in earnest, but also

that we have every confidence in the love and generosity of our Heavenly Father.

Let us then resolve to make a generous use of prayer, knowing that God will reward us and pour out His choicest graces upon us. If He does not grant the precise thing we ask for, let us not be in the least disturbed. On the contrary, let us rather thank Him, since to refuse us means that He in His divine wisdom sees that the thing asked for will do us no good, and might perhaps interfere with our truest interests or even endanger our very salvation. In any case He will not allowe us to go away with our hands empty. If He does not grant us what we ask for, He will bestow some other and more precious gift upon us and enable us to exercise greater virtue, and ultimately to secure a higher place in the Kingdom of Heaven for all eternity.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Temptation

Text:—"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

IN to-day's Gospel the Church sets before us the startling picture of our Divine Lord being actually tempted by the devil. It seems a strange meeting: yet our Divine Master submitted to it not only because He was determined to be like us "in all things, excepting sin," but also because He wished to teach us by His own example how to conduct ourselves while under the attacks of "the most wicked one."

We have no hesitation in seizing this opportunity of treating of temptation, since it is undoubtedly one of the most practical as well as one of the most personal matters that can command our attention. This fact will surely come home to us, so soon as we realize that the immense—one might almost say—the incalculable difference between the highest of the saints, now reigning in Heaven, and the very worst of the reprobate now writhing in hell, must be ascribed wholly to the different ways in which they conducted themselves under temptation.

To fix the subject more firmly in our minds, we will divide it into several points. In the first place then, we will consider that temptation is necessary for us, and wholly unavoidable. God's intention is that we should be tried in various ways. We are sent into the world in order that we may have our virtue, and our loyalty, and our resolutions put to the test.

It matters not where we dwell, nor what our vocation or manner of life may be, it is quite certain that temptation will find us out. Whether we live in the midst of the gay and giddy world, or whether we shut ourselves up in the seclusion of a monastery, we shall not escape. Our days may be passed in the noisy,

bustling thoroughfares of a big town, or they may be passed in a cleft of some rock in a far-off desert. It matters not; our virtue, our fidelity, our loyalty will be, and must be put to the test all the same. If we have any years of life yet before us, we may rest assured that we shall have many battles to fight, and many victories to gain before we pass to judgment. The Holy Spirit reminds us that "man's life upon earth is a warfare," and that it is "through many tribulations that we are to enter into the Kingdom of God." Consequently we can harbor no honest doubt on the subject.

Now, so soon as we fully realize that no efforts that we can make can rid us of this great enemy of our salvation, we shall recognize that the only wise course is to face it boldly: to meet the danger with calmness and coolness and determination. And this should be a comparatively easy matter, because, while we know that temptation is necessary, we know also, in the second place, that it is no sin, but only an invitation to sin, and further that it has no power to force us off the path of perfect virtue. It is very important to remember that spiritual warfare differs from physical warfare in many ways, but in nothing so much as in the conditions of victory. In an ordinary field of battle, the very bravest may be shot down; and the greatest valor will not save troops from destruction if their ammunition gives out, or if they are badly led. Hence, however courageous I may be, when marching against an earthly foe, I know that my courage alone, however great, is powerless to save me.

In the spiritual conflict it is quite different. In our struggles with the devil, the world, and the flesh, to be brave is to conquer—to be courageous and resolute is the same thing as to be victorious. In fact, we are unconquerable and invulnerable so long as we withhold our consent: and no power on earth or in hell can ever compel us to yield that, if only we are resolved not to do so. Why do I speak so positively? Because Almighty God, in His infinite mercy and com-

passion, has solemnly promised so to dispose things, that however severely we may be tempted, we shall never be tempted beyond our strength.

St. Paul himself, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter x, asures us of this in inspired words, saying: "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able (to resist), but will make also with the temptation issue, that we may be able to bear it." And when, on one occasion this same great Apostle, feeling himself so severely tempted, began to lose courage, our Lord sweetly rebuked him, saying: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity." (2 Cor. xii. 9.)

This fact should fill us with the greatest courage, even in the very midst of every sort of trouble and opposition. Let us thank God who has made us stronger and mightier than all our foes put together; for however much they may storm and rage, we know, with the certainty of Divine faith, that they can never enter into the citadel of our hearts, nor rob us of our virtue until we, of our own free will, have weakly and basely flung open the gates and let them in.

In the second place, we must bear in mind not only that temptation can do us no harm if we are true to ourselves, but that it can be of the greatest service to us, and procure for us countless blessings and rewards. Some persons seem to imagine that to resist temptation is merely to stand where we might have fallen; and that we are no better off when we emerge from the struggle than we were when we first entered into it. But this is a profound mistake. The truth is, temptation never leaves us as it finds us. If we give way under it, we are much worse off than we were, but if we vanquish it, we are immeasurably better off. Why? Because we have acted nobly; because we have proved our loyalty and our love of God, and especially, because we have not merely fought the good fight, but won a glorious victory, which will secure for us an imperishable crown of glory in Heaven.

One, indeed, who is never tempted, can never overcome. Who never fights a battle can never win a battle. He is like a soldier who has never seen any active service. While one who is always battling with his passions and his evil inclinations is like a real warrior, who has risked his life a thousand times for his king, and comes home at last, when the Master calls him, honored, respected, loved, rewarded. Another valuable purpose which temptation serves is to help us to know ourselves, and our miseries, and to keep us meek and humble of heart.

When all is at peace we are too apt to flatter ourselves that we are strong in virtue, and that nothing can ever move us from the strict path of duty. When we observe others disgracing themselves and falling into sin, we are apt to despise them and to look down upon them, and to think how very much better, and how very much more wisely, we would have behaved under the same or similar circumstances. And so we live in a fool's paradise; until all at once God mercifully permits us to feel the strong wind of temptation. Then little by little we begin to realize our weakness. What seemed so easy and so simple at a distance, proves upon nearer acquaintance almost too much for us; so that we almost yield when we find ourselves in the actual occasion of sin. Instead of feeling safe and secure, we grow horribly conscious of our weakness. The danger of falling grows intensely real, and we stretch out our hands to Heaven, and implore God to "save us or we perish." Sometimes, even, an actual fall may be found necessary to remove our overconfidence and our foolish self-complacency. We have such an example in the case of the great Apostle St. Peter, who was weak and ignorant enough to confide in his own resolution. When his Divine Master told him the night before He suffered that he and the other Apostles would be scandalized in Him, and would abandon Him in His Passion, Peter refused to believe. He knew himself so little that he could not be persuaded that he would ever be so base as to betray his

own Lord and Master. "I will go with Thee to prison and to death," he exclaimed. Even when Jesus turned to him and addressed him personally, and in the singular number, and told him to his face that on that very night, before the cock had crowed twice, he would deny Him thrice, Peter remained unconvinced and refused to believe such a forecast of his perfidy. He thought this cowardice possible in others, not in himself. "Even though *all* should deny Thee," he cried out, "*I* shall *never* deny Thee."

We know the sequel. We remember how he followed our Lord from afar; how eventually he stole into the Hall of Pilate "to see the end." And alas! my brethren, we also know how his courage failed him. He became unnerved, as he caught sight of the judge seated on his throne, and of the Roman soldiers standing around, and of Jesus standing bound, and helpless as a lamb before His executioners, and his whole soul was petrified with fear, so that he was mute. Then when first one and then another of those present began to accuse him of being a friend of Jesus, he utterly failed to keep his promise to go with Him "to prison and to death." On the contrary, he would not acknowledge Jesus at all, but declared that he had nothing to do with Him. Why? He even sought to leave the Court under the impression that he did not know so much as the Lord's name; for he referred to Him merely as "the man!" "He began to curse and swear that he knew not the man." Our Lord, who had loved him, made him an Apostle, and treated him as a son, was now treated by Peter (under the pressure of temptation) as a stranger, an outsider, and one utterly unknown. In short, he fell miserably; but it awoke him to a true sense of his weakness. He realized that "without God we can do nothing."

Thus Peter learned a great and salutary lesson. Thus did temptation teach him to know himself, and his own inherent weakness, and the danger of trusting to his own personal resolutions, instead of trusting to God alone, and to the grace that is given from above to

those who have humility enough to beg and implore for it, from Him who is always ready "to make issue, with every temptation, that we may be able to bear it."

We, my dear brethren, are quite proud and conceited enough even now, after all our sad falls and narrow escapes. What, then, would be our arrogance and our pride had we never experienced the attacks of the devil, and never been buffeted and molested by the strong blasts of temptation?

Another important purpose that temptation serves is to develop our latent virtues, and to render them more and more perfect and pleasing to God. How many great Saints there are who would never have made much advance in virtue, but for temptation? Look, *e. g.*, at Abraham. He was, no doubt, a good and faithful servant of God, but his faith would have remained at a very ordinary level had it not been severely tried by Almighty God, in various ways; thus he was assured, even in his old age, that he would have a son, though both he and his wife had reached a time when it is no longer possible, humanly speaking, to beget children. Yet this, notwithstanding, Abraham readily believed the Word of God and His power over nature and nature's laws. The temptation, no doubt, though proving too much for Sarah, his wife, who "laughed incredulously behind the door of the tent," was resisted by Abraham himself, whose faith never faltered. Then, after his son Isaac was born, God tried Abraham still more severely. Having first told him that his descendants would be "as numerous as the stars in the heavens," and would develop into a great nation, He then commanded Abraham to slay his *only* child, saying: "Take thy only begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision, and there thou shalt offer him for a holocaust upon one of the mountains which I shall show thee."

This was indeed a terrible temptation well calculated to upset any man whose love and faith were not strongly rooted. It was a most severe trial of *obedience;* for Abraham loved his son exceedingly. To

ask him to make a "holocaust" of him, that is to say, first to slay him, and then to burn his body till it was wholly consumed, was to test his love of God and his obedience to the uttermost.

But it was, at the same time, a trial of his *faith*. For Abraham might well have reasoned within himself and said: "I am now nearly 125 years old, and my wife Sarah is over 90, so we cannot expect any more children. If, then, I kill my only boy, how can God's promise be fulfilled, that my descendants shall outnumber the very stars! My son, so far as I can see, is the only means by which grandchildren and great-grandchildren can be born to me. If *he* perish by my hand, all hope of God's promise being accomplished seems lost." But Abraham never faltered in his faith. He could not explain; he found no solution to the tangle; but one truth he never questioned, and that was, God would keep His word. By some means or another God would prove His veracity. Accordingly, Abraham proceeded to carry out God's command, with the most perfect and prompt obedience and faith, and so won merits and graces from Almighty God which a more ordinary and untried faith could never claim.

Abraham's faith is celebrated throughout the whole world. And why? Not because he believed God, which is true of millions of others. But because he believed, and continued to believe, even when he could not explain, and when what he was asked to believe seemed not merely difficult, but utterly impossible!

So it is, dear brethren, with ourselves. Our virtues gather in force and strength by exercise. And the more frequent our occasions of exercising them, the more precious they become in God's sight. If God were to withhold all temptations and to clear from our path every opposition and difficulty, we might indeed remain loyal and true to Him. But our loyalty would be of little worth.

Consider the white-robed army of martyrs: those noble souls who, rather than offend God, have shed

their blood and died most gloriously for the cause of Truth.

The martyrs form one of the special glories and ornaments of Heaven. To rob Heaven of its martyrs would be to rob it of some of its most splendid, noble heroic citizens. Yet there would be no martyrs but for temptation. Had God not permitted tyrants and wicked persecutors to try the loyalty and the steadfastness and the boundless love of His saints by threats of imprisonment, torture and death, they would never have had any opportunity of showing their intense love, their unfaltering loyalty and their heroic obedience. It is only by passing victoriously through many trials, temptations and tribulations that we can hope to attain to a high place in the Kingdom of God. Let us then not murmur nor complain of temptation, but try rather to emulate the joy of the saints, who went to martyrdom as to a marriage feast, and the satisfaction of the Apostles, who, when cruelly scourged, "went away rejoicing that they were deemed worthy to suffer something for the love of Christ."

The season of Lent, on which we have just entered, is a specially befitting time in which to examine ourselves upon this point. Let us, then, look back upon our past lives, so that we may ascertain how we have conducted ourselves when exposed to the insidious attacks of the devil, the world, and the flesh. Have we seen in these temptations an opportunity afforded us by God Himself of proving our loyalty, of strengthening our virtue, and of winning a victory and thus meriting an eternal recompense? Have we called upon God in our anguish and felt how absolutely secure we were in His protection? Or, have we trusted to ourselves, and thus shamefully yielded to our passions and become a sport to our enemies? Now is the time to learn from our past experience. Now is the time to form our good resolutions: for life is hurrying by, the years are becoming fewer, and the time that remains to us is growing visibly shorter. Full soon we shall hear the dread summons to appear before the Infinite

Judge to give to Him a full and accurate account of our whole lives. Be wise, then, in time. Work, toil, pray and do penance while the day of life lasts, for "the night cometh, when no man can work." Then, in His own good time, God will bless you and give you a place of honor and happiness in His own bright Home above.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Essence of Real Sanctity

Text:—"This is the Will of God, your Sanctification."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

IF we travel through the world, and contemplate the lives of the multitudes of men and women around us and study their ways and habits, and listen to their daily conversation, we might almost be led to suppose that they had been created and placed in this world for the express purpose of making money, amassing fortunes, and enjoying themselves. Go into the great cities and emporiums of trade and into the busy hives of industry, and watch the teeming populations. How eager, how interested and how zealous they all seem to be. Pass through the public markets, the immense shops and stores, the stock exchanges and banking establishments and other places where men most do congregate, and note their anxious faces, their excited gestures and concentrated looks. What is the meaning of so much concern and excitement? What is "the one thing necessary"; the all-absorbing interest in *their* minds? Money! Wealth! Yes; their minds are filled with thoughts of business, of speculations, of trade, of investments, of shares and dividends, of money saving and money making and of other purely mundane concerns. To the only matter of real importance they pay scarcely any heed. How many of them examine their consciences as carefully as they examine their bank-books? How many of them, we wonder, are as anxious to lay up treasures in Heaven as they are to lay up treasures upon earth? How many of them feel as much remorse and bitter regret for the loss of grace as they do for the loss of money or goods, or for the failure of some business transactions? In short, how many are leading truly Christian lives and seeking beyond all things and above all things to se-

cure the treasure of eternal Life? How many seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, so that all else may be added to them by the munificence of their Heavenly Father? It is greatly to be feared that those who dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to Divine things are in a very small minority.

Yet our chief duty is not to accumulate wealth, nor to succeed in business, nor to drive a thriving trade, but simply to save and to sanctify our immortal souls. "What doeth it profit a man to gain the whole world (or, for the matter of that, a thousand worlds) and then suffer the loss of his own soul?" Our sanctification is the supreme and only really necessary duty. It is also the express desire and will of God, according to the text: "This is the will of God, your sanctification." If then others refuse to listen to the Divine admonition; if they neglect God's invitation and "go their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise," as the Gospel parable points out (Matt. xxii. 5), let *us* at least harden not our heart, but do our very best to carry out His will.

In order to do this successfully we must begin by forming a true and accurate notion of Sanctity. Now, it must be admitted, that at first glance Sanctity seems to be an exceedingly complicated thing. It seems to be made up of prayers and penances, and fasts and alms-deeds, and sermons and ceremonies, and Sacraments, and Benedictions, and Masses and devotions of all kinds. But this is a mistake. Sanctity in reality is a very simple thing. We do not say that it is an easy thing in itself. We do not say that it is an *easy thing to acquire;* but it is *easy to define.* In fact, the whole essence and kernel of Sanctity may be expressed in one single word; and that one word is Love. Sanctity is nothing more or less than the love of God. Who loves God is holy. Who loves God with great intensity is very holy. Who loves God more intensely than any other creature loves Him, is the holiest of all creatures. Who loves God with an infinite love, is

infinitely holy.* God alone loves Himself with an infinite love, hence God alone is infinitely holy. *Deus caritas est.* "God is love."

But here we must be most careful to give the word Love its proper meaning. When we speak of Love, we do not mean feeling, emotion, passion; nor do we mean poetry, sentiment and softness. Love does not consist in sighs and tears, nor in striking attitudes. No! It is something far more real and immeasurably more practical. It consists in the complete harmony between the created will of man and the uncreated will of God. It is the perfect subjection and the absolute surrender of the human will to the Divine; the desire, at all times, and in all places, and under all circumstances, to accomplish the will of the infinitely Perfect, rather than our own will. In fact, this is precisely the test applied by our Blessed Lord Himself. He says: *"If you love me, keep my commandments."* In a word: "If you love me, show your love by doing what I tell you." So again, in another place, He says: "If any man love me, he will keep my word." Hence, if we would know for certain whether we are really and truly loving God, or not, we have but to examine our consciences as to whether we are careful to obey His Law, and to do His will in all things. Our feeling and emotions are no guide whatever. It matters not what or how we feel. So long as we are resisting temptation and striving with all our might to obey God's commandments, that is proof enough that our love is genuine and that we are on the road to perfection.

The example of our Lord Himself is a sufficient testimony to the soundness of this principle. Remember that our Divine Lord came down to earth and was made Man, not only to redeem us and save us from hell, but also to be our model and example. He was

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* Perfectos facit caritas. . . . *Qui multum amat magnus est, qui minus amat minus est;* quia secundum magnitudinem caritatis quam in nobis habemus coram Deo appreciamur. ("Incendum Amoris," By Richard Rolle of Hampole, the great mystic, p. 164.)

the absolutely perfect. The Saint of saints; the Holy of holies. We have only to imitate Him, and to follow His lead, and to apply His principles to ourselves in order to become perfect. "Who followeth me, walketh not in darkness." "I am the way, the truth and the life." Now, the great and all-pervading principle throughout our Blessed Lord's Life was the doing the will of His Heavenly Father. In this He gloried. In this He saw His own perfection. In this He proved His Sanctity, and in this He proclaimed His Love.

Even before He actually appeared in the world, it was announced that He was coming to do the will of His Heavenly Father. "In the head of the book it is written of me: that I should do Thy will, O! God. . . . Then said I, Behold I come to do Thy will, Oh God." (Heb. x. 7, 9.)

When later, in the fulness of time, Jesus was actually born in the stable of Bethlehem, we are told that the Heavens opened, and that the Angels were heard singing a joyous melody. And what was the burden of their wondrous song? "Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men." To what kind of men? To all "men of good will." That is to say, to all whose wills were in harmony with the adorable will of God. As sin is the breaking away and the dissolution of this harmony, and the following of our own opposing will, so sanctity or virtue is the bending and (if needful) the constraining of our own perverse and sinful will to the demands of the Divine will.

Further, so soon as Christ grew up and entered upon His public ministry, He turned toward those whom He had chosen as His followers and disciples, and said: "Behold, I come, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me." Thereby clearly indicating the perfection of His purpose, and the ruling principle of His whole Life.

Somewhat later, when the disciples besought Him to teach them how to pray, He replied: "Thus shalt thou pray," etc.; and He taught them the Our Father. Now, my dear brethren, there is one petition in the

Our Father that sums up, as it were, in a nut-shell the whole essence and marrow of supernatural perfection, and that is the petition: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is (done by the Blessed) in Heaven." Reflect, for a moment, that God is the infinite and uncreated Perfection. Secondly, that His will is but the outward expression of that Perfection. And then it follows, thirdly, that *to do that will* must be to do what is, in itself, the most perfect and the most exalted. Nothing higher or better or more estimable can be said of any creature, whether on earth or in Heaven, than that he does God's will in all things, and does it perfectly.

Hence it follows that whosoever can say (not indeed with his lips only, but) with his whole heart, in times of sorrow, as in times of joy, and in times of trial and tribulation, as in times of prosperity and success, "Thy will be done," is not far from the Kingdom of Heaven. Yes, there is not the shadow of a doubt but that, if we wish to be perfect, all we need do is to cry out from the depths of our soul: "Thy will, and not my will, be done." "May Thy most beautiful, Thy most exalted, Thy most perfect will be accomplished in me, and by me, and in all that concerns me, and not my selfish and worldly and sinful will." Indeed we must beseech Almighty God not only that His will may be done by us, but that it may be done with the same joyousness, and the same promptitude, and with the same perfection, with which the Blessed do it in Heaven. Take this petition, my beloved brethren, and write it in golden letters on the very substance of your souls. Let it dwell forever within the centre of your hearts. Keep it before your minds and on your lips. Let it be your constant prayer. When things prosper with you, when life is full of brightness and sunshine, cry: "Thy will be done!" But should storms arise and the heavens grow dark and lowering, and should difficulties and dangers beset your path, be not dismayed, but cry only the louder: "Thy will be done!" In spite of appearances, trust absolutely in God's love. Trust it, be-

cause it is *His;* trust it, because it is infinite; trust it, because He has given you the highest proof of it; "greater love than this no man hath, that he give his life for his friend." And, in your trust, cry out: "Thy will be done." Yes, in all times, and in all circumstances, let that be your glorious battlecry and your constant watchword. This may sometimes be hard to flesh and blood; it may mean real heroism, but all true followers of the Crucified are heroes. And the Divine Master has not only given us the command and pointed out the way of perfection, but He has been the first to follow it.

Transport yourselves back to the Garden of Olives some nineteen hundred years ago. Look upon the prostrate form of the eternal Son of God, clothed in our weak humanity. Gaze upon His Face. Contemplate the look of unutterable pain and anguish. Try and realize the measureless agony that must have overwhelmed His sensitive human soul as He called to mind with fearful vividness the sufferings that His Heavenly Father wished Him to undergo. The injustice of the judges, who were to condemn Him; the ingratitude of the disciple, who was to betray Him into the hands of His executioners; the shame and humiliation of the mock trials, and the bitterness of an ignominious death were all foreseen. He knew, and, as it were, counted every blow of the scourge that was to rend and tear His quivering Flesh; He heard, in anticipation, every stroke of the hammer that was to drive the nails through His Hands and Feet; He seemed to listen to the blasphemies and taunts and imprecations of the multitude, who would so soon surge around His Cross and gloat over His sufferings. The knowledge of all this was so agonizing that He began to sweat blood, which gathered into great drops, and bedewed the ground. In His dire distress He asked if it were possible to be spared so terrible a passion, and so appalling a death. "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me." This He did in order to let us know that He was indeed human; that

He really felt the full weight of His trials; and that His soul was sorrowful "even unto death." But then He added words which revealed the absolute sanctity of His soul, and His willingness to do His Father's will, even when most difficult. "Let this chalice pass from me, but *not my will, but Thine be done.*"

So, too, we are not commanded or even expected to be indifferent to suffering, nor to experience no natural repugnance to pain and humiliation and the rest. No. All we are asked to do is to imitate our Lord and to express our willingness to endure such trials, when God sees they are good for us, and to bow our stubborn wills in obedience to His commands, even when their fufillment is arduous and difficult. In short, our sanctity must be sought in our readiness to carry out God's will in all the duties and obligations of our state of life. We must be ready to accept from His Hands whatever He is pleased to send us in the form of trials, tribulations, temptations, sufferings, sorrows and bereavements. He knows what is best for us, and what is most conducive to our true and eternal interests, so that we should trust Him utterly. But God tries no one beyond his strength. He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. He mingles the sweet with the bitter, and "as a father has compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him." (Ps. cii. 13.)

To sum up the whole matter into a practical and an intelligible form, let us simply assure you that whatever may be your occupation or walk in life, you are most certainly called to perfection. You may be a gentleman at large, or you may be a merchant, a professional man, a soldier or sailor, a laborer or servant, a shopkeeper or mechanic. It matters not what. Whatever you may be, you are called by name, to aim at sanctity. "Be ye holy, as your heavenly Father is holy."

And how are you to obey this command? There is no necessity for you to leave your present work or employment. There is no obligation for you to fly

into the desert, or to seek some solitary cell on the mountain top, nor even to don the habit of a monk or of a mendicant friar. No. All you are asked to do is to fulfil your ordinary daily duties in a proper spirit, and for the honor and glory of God. You must realize that you are where you are by the Providence of God; that He appoints each man to his particular avocation; that nothing in this world happens by chance, and that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God's appointment. Hence, be content with your lot. Envy no man. Be not only satisfied, but even pleased to do the work that falls to your hands, because it is the task set by the Providence of God. He will reward you, not because your work is important, or honorable, or esteemed by the world, or for any other motive that appeals to men, but simply because it is the work He has appointed. You are pleasing God, not because you are publishing books of philosophy, or because you are winning great victories in the field of battle, or because you are ruling over mighty empires, but simply and solely because you are doing God's will. Better a hundred thousand times be selling oranges in the streets, or sweeping the road-crossing, or washing the dirty plates and dishes in the back scullery, if such be the will of God, than performing the highest offices of Church or State if such is not the will of God.

How wonderful it is to think how God has contrived, in His wisdom, to place this immense Treasure of Sanctity within the reach of every mortal man. It is all a matter of recognizing God's will in everything, and in doing God's will in everything, and in seeking His will in everything. For, it cannot be too frequently repeated, that Sanctity does not consist in doing extraordinary things, but in doing ordinary things with extraordinary perfection. As the author of "The Imitation of Christ" so truly and so beautifully observes: "God considers not the gift of the lover, but the love of the giver." Hence, wherever I may be, I can become a Saint. Man often tries to

persuade himself, that if only he were somewhere else but where God has placed him, he would be so much better. He seeks to excuse his weakness and indifference and neglect of grace by putting it all down to his "unfortunate condition," or to the "special difficulties of his peculiar situation," or to his "unhappy surroundings," and so forth. But these are the vainest of vain pleas, and of no value whatever.

The highest of all Saints, and the holiest by far, was our Blessed Lady. Yet who could have led a more simple, a more humble, a more commonplace life, in so far as it is judged by the world, than she did. Let us pause for a moment to consider it. In the first place she was but an ordinary village maiden, for all the world knew or cared. Then, she lived in a tiny house, in an obscure village, far from the great ones of the earth. And how did she occupy her time? She swept the floors. She made the fire, and cooked food for her Divine Son and St. Joseph. Then she wiped the few dishes, and cleaned up the place, and went to the well hard by to draw water in a pitcher, which she poised upon her head, as was the custom in those days in the East, and performed other menial offices. Is there a single person listening to me today, whose life is as humble, as obscure, as commonplace, as lowly and as simple? Yet we know with absolute certainty that she was day by day rendering greater glory to God, and leading a holier life, and piling up greater merit for eternity than any other creature that ever lived, or will live, whether in Heaven or on earth. Why is this? Precisely on account of what I have been insisting on all through this discourse, namely, because Sanctity has nothing to do with what we do, but only with how and why we do it. Our Immaculate and ever Blessed Mother, the most pure virgin, sought God in all things, and above all things. Consequently she sought only to do His will, and to do it most perfectly. Every act was dictated by love. Everything to which she put her hand was done for His sake, and for His sake

alone. Her mind was so full of God, and her heart beat so entirely for Him, that she would rather a thousand times have done the most abject and humble act, if it were *according* to His will, than have ruled, with the most brilliant success, over a thousand kingdoms in *opposition* to His will.

Cannot we make some attempt to follow so magnificent a lead? Cannot we also, according to the measure of our graces, walk in her footsteps and seek perfection, as she sought it, namely in the daily discharge of our common-place duties? We need not go beyond the narrow circle of our present surroundings. To be a Saint, it is enough to rise promptly at the appointed time; to dress ourselves modestly; to say our prayers devoutly; to set about our given task; to perform the various offices that fall to our lot, in a spirit of obedience, and for love of God, without murmur or complaint; to take our food and our recreation with the thought of God before us; and to do literally everything because He has so ordained, according to the injunction of the Apostle: "Whether you eat or whether you drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all for the honor and glory of God."

If the very lowest actions, such as eating and drinking, can be sanctified and offered up to God, how much more may all our nobler and more intellectual acts be sanctified in the same way, and performed in His honor, and to the glory of His name.

Let us set ourselves to the task at once and without further hesitation or delay. God desires to see us advancing. He wishes to number us among His Saints. "This is the will of God, your sanctification." Let us then do His will, for this will not only be pleasing to Him, but it will also be to us a source of endless profit and of everlasting happiness.

That we may succeed in our efforts and cooperate with God's abundant grace, and at last attain to a high place in the Kingdom of Heaven, is the greatest blessing I can wish for you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Cooperation With Christ

Text:—"He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

THIS earth, my dear brethren, where we are each called upon to pass our brief span of life, may well be compared to a vast battlefield. A field in which a fierce and never-ending war is being incessantly waged; where light and darkness, good and evil are ever struggling for the mastery, and where many fall and perish everlastingly.

On the one side are ranged the World; the Flesh; and the Devil, together with his satellites, the fallen angels; those terrible "principalities and powers and rulers of the world of this darkness," to whom St. Paul alludes in his epistle to the Philippians (vi. 12). On the opposite side are Jesus Christ and the faithful members of His Church, set "like an army in battle array," and boldy contending for virtue, purity, honesty, and truth. We live in the very midst of these opposing forces, and must necessarily take part in the conflict. It is impossible for us to withdraw from the battle, even if we would;—impossible even to assume a neutral attitude. We are bound to declare ourselves, and to throw in our lot either with Christ, or alas! with the enemies of Christ. "Who is not with me, is against me." Not to take up arms on the side of Christ—not to be actively engaged in His service, is to resist Him, and to place oneself in positive opposition. "He that gathereth not with me, scattereth." This is an awful statement, but one which can not be denied, or called into question, for God Himself has enunciated it.

It is furthermore a statement we may well lay to heart, especially in these days, for it would be difficult to point to any period in the eventful history of

the Church, in which loyalty, bravery, and personal service, on the part of her children, were more imperatively needed than at present. Perhaps there never was a time when such demands were made upon the zeal and generosity and self-sacrifice of every true follower of Christ.

On every side the Church is opposed. In every land her divine claims are questioned, and her rights denied. "The Gentiles rage, and people devise vain things. The kings of the earth stand up, and the princes meet together against the Lord, and against the Church." (Ps. ii. 1, 2.) Christ's Vicar, the Pope, is a prisoner. His religious Orders are driven out from their homes, to seek refuge in foreign lands. Liberty and freedom of action are in many places denied to His bishops, and His representatives are now persecuted as Christ foretold they would be even as He Himself was. "They have persecuted me, and they will also persecute you." (John xv. 20.)

Opposition there has always been. Opposition there always will be. Indeed, it could not be otherwise, for "the world is the enemy of God," and the whole purpose of the Church, yea, its very *raison d'être,* is to combat, and withstand, and resist its wickedness and its evil influence. From the very nature of the case it could not be otherwise. For "what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial? (2 Cor. vi. 14.)

Now, so long as the deadly struggle endures, we dare not stand aloof, as idle and listless spectators. Justice, truth, loyalty, and even our own personal interest all urge us to throw ourselves courageously into the fight and to do our utmost in defense of a cause which should be dearer to us than life itself. Every man, whatever may be his worldly calling or position, must declare himself—and, by his life and conduct, does in very truth declare himself—to be either with Christ or against Him! Every one, be he ever so humble, or so poor, or so unlettered, either "gathereth

with Christ, or scattereth"—that is to say, is either helping to build up the spiritual structure established by Christ on Blessed Peter, or is helping to drag it down.

The momentous question we have to ask ourselves is: Are we, who are now gathered about this altar this morning, doing all that we can, or at least all that we ought to do, to promote the interests of God among men, and to extend His kingdom upon earth? Again and again we are accustomed to repeat the petition: "Thy kingdom come." Whenever we recite the Pater, those beautiful words rise to our lips. But, beloved brethren, such a petition is little better than a mockery if we ourselves are, all the while, hindering and impeding and interfering with the extension of that kingdom by our sinful lives, our bad example, and our general worldliness, carelessness, dissipation, and love of pleasure.

To unite ourselves to Christ and to cooperate with Him as our Master, our Leader and our King, is not merely a solemn duty, but it is one of the greatest and most stupendous honors and privileges that could be conferred upon us. Call to mind, in the first place, who He is who summons us to fight under His banner, and in the second place the nature of the work in which He wishes us to engage. Our Leader is no other than the Incarnate God, the Creator of Heaven and of earth, "who has power of life and death, and who leads down to the gates of death and brings back again." (Wis. xvi. 13.) And whom no man can resist. So exalted and infinite is our King, that to be associated with Him in any degree whatsoever is an honor immeasurably surpassing all the honors and dignities of the world. And what is the work in which he deigns to ask us to assist and cooperate? It is no other, dear brethren, than the salvation and redemption of mankind.

God loves the world. He loves it so ardently that "He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life ever-

lasting." (John iii. 16.) He wishes "all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4.), and that not one should perish.

He regards them as His own children, whom he has "purchased at a great price" (1 Cor. vi. 20), so that who touches them so as to injure them "touches the apple of his eye." (Za. ii. 8.) His love is no mere sentiment, no mere empty declaration, but deep and strong, and persevering; revealing itself in acts entailing much personal suffering and anguish, and even death itself.

As we lift our heads and fix our gaze upon the Cross of Calvary, and look intently upon His agonizing frame, quivering with pain, we may read the anguish of His soul written upon every feature, and recognize the presence of a love stronger than death. Each drop of blood, as it oozes out of the thousand wounds the scourge and the thorns have made, and falls like rain upon the hard rock, reveals to us the intensity of His love, and speaks of an affection too deep for utterance. As our eyes meet His, all diffused with tears, they seem to appeal, even to us, on behalf of sinners. We are ourselves, of course, the fruits of His passion. We have been washed by His precious blood in holy Baptism, and illuminated by His grace, and let us hope we are keeping His commandments. But He demands something more. He desires that we should not only live for Him ourselves, but that we should strive to make others also live for Him. He expects, and has a right to expect that we, His own beloved children, should be keenly sensitive and touchy about His honor, and that we should make His interests our very own, and do all in our power to promote the great object for which He did not hesitate to sacrifice honor and life.

Alas! my brethren, the number of men who seriously weigh and duly consider the duty of cooperating actively in the salvation of the world is, we fear, small. Many would persuade themselves that such duties are confined exclusively to Bishops, priests, and religious,

and that laymen are entirely exempt. Yet it is clear that they likewise are given a share, and a very important share in the work; and that an attitude of passive indifference and unconcern is impossible to one who loves Christ ardently, and incompatible with the express teaching of Christ Himself.

No man lives to himself alone. We are always influencing our fellows for good or for evil. To pass through life and leave no trace of our passage, is more impossible than to walk along on the soft, wet sand and leave no impress of our feet. As we are—either consciously, or oftener unconsciously—influenced by others, so in like manner others are influenced by us. They are influenced by our conduct, by our general character, by our method of life; and by our views and opinions and judgments whether of men or of things. Then, it concerns us very closely to ask: What *is* our conduct? Ah! How many interests are bound up in the answer! Is it upright, honest, pure, gentle, and loyal? Is it humble, considerate, charitable? Are we actuated by high principles, and guided by the maxims of the Gospel? "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven." (Matt. v. 16.) Do those who see us, who know us, who witness our daily conduct, who number us among their friends, feel our life to be "a light" illuminating them on their way; a "beacon" pointing out the road to Heaven? In one word, is our habitual attitude of body and mind such, that they are impelled at the sight of it, "to glorify their Father in Heaven?" What, my brethren, is in very truth your influence upon others? On your own family, on your servants and dependents, on your numerous friends, acquaintances and associates, on those you meet at balls, parties, dinners and other social gatherings, or in the hunting or cricket field, in the market place or on the stock exchange? Yes! Again I demand, *what* is your ordinary every-day influence? Observe, I do not inquire if it be great or small, striking or insignificant. For

whether great or small matters little, the important question is: Is it an influence for good? Is it, at least, *so far as it goes,* an influence in *the right direction?* Is it helpful, elevating, and edifying ? Or is it perhaps the reverse? Are you "scattering," and not "gathering"? Are you winning souls to God, or repelling or hindering them by your worldliness, your intemperance, your licentiousness? Does the thought of your responsibility in this matter, at least, weigh upon you? Are you at least aiming, however feebly, however unworthily, at becoming a factor for good, rather than for evil? However restricted may be the sphere of your influence, are you resolved that such as it is, it shall be exerted on the side of God?

Take one single element in our complicated life, *i. e.,* our conversation. Consider the hours that pass away in mere talk, and yet how little most men are given to measure their words! How few pause to consider whether their speech is helping or hindering the spread of virtue. "The tongue," says St. James, "is a fire, and a world of iniquity"—and "full of deadly poison." (Chap. iii. 6-8.) Who indeed will attempt to recount the harm done by that unruly member? Who will trace out the ravages caused by an unwise and unrestrained talker? It is in the course of familiar intercourse and unconsidered chatter that men gloss over crimes and excuse excesses, and dress up vice itself till it almost wears the appearance of virtue. It is when they are meet to talk that they tell loose stories, perpetrate lewd jests, and cast aside the restraints of modesty. They may persuade themselves that they mean no harm, and are merely doing what others do, yet they are "scattering" not "gathering:" yes, scattering the seeds of sin and aiding and abetting the devil in his warfare against Christ. Again, we find men who criticize the Church and her laws and decrees in an undutiful and carping spirit, and thereby lessen in others the sense of reverence for her authority. They hope to win easy reputation for liberality and broadmindedness by siding with her enemies, and,

by their disloyal and insubordinate expressions of opinion, undo and hamper the work of Christ. Many offend to a greater or less degree in this way, but some surpass all bounds and seem to persuade themselves that they have received a special mission to set the Church of God right. They pose as teachers, not as taught. They wish to govern, not to obey; to judge, and not to be judged. Nothing that the Pope or his council does or decrees is right till it has received their sanction and approval. They have neither wisdom enough to submit, nor even modesty enough to keep silence, but must needs vent their superior wisdom in a loud, consequential, dictatorial manner in the most hostile and anti-Catholic journals that they can find; and invite the heretical press to assist them to improve the policy of the Holy See; to amend the decrees of the Roman congregations, or to upset the ruling of their own ordinary. While professing to be practical Catholics, they side with the enemies of the Church, judge her on no higher principles than those that govern the world, and repeat as new and true discoveries calumnies as old, and often older than Christianity itself. Such conduct has aroused the attention of Pope Leo XIII. himself, who complains in burning words that: "the license which is commonly counfounded with liberty, the passion for criticizing and finding fault with everything, the habit of throwing into print whatever men think or feel, have so confused and darkened men's minds that the Church's office as a Teacher has now become more than ever necessary to save Christians from being drawn away from conscience or duty." (Letter to Card. Gibbons.)

A man need not be a priest, nor yet a devotee, in order to labor with Christ in drawing souls to God, and leading them on to virtue. A man in the world, more especially if he be an educated man, is no insignificant or negligible factor. He is but an individual, it is true, but then the Church is made up of individuals. And a single individual has it in his power either to do much mischief or to render great

service to the Church—far more indeed than is generally supposed. In plain fact, his responsibilities are enormous. Let each one here take that fact to heart, and decide for himself whether he is resolved to exercise this influence on the side of Christ or against Him. I have said that his influence is enormous, and I said it advisedly. Not indeed when viewed from the point of view of the erroneous judgment of the world, but when viewed as God views, it is so. It may not seem to be much, yet is enormous, for this simple reason that it affects interests which are eternal and supernatural, and because eternal, therefore more important than even the very greatest interest of time. There is scarcely any one—however obscure—whose influence does not reach to many others, but even though it extended but to one other, we should still contend that his responsibility is exceedingly great. To affect the present spiritual state of that single soul is to affect its eternal future, since its future is bound up with the present. To win that one soul from vice to virtue, or to lead it from virtue to a yet higher degree of virtue, is to alter and to raise its condition throughout the whole limitless length of its endless future!

Well, then, may a man grow serious and fearful if he have even but one other person at all subject to his influence. How enormously the responsibility grows when, through any particular circumstance of relationship or dependence, that influence is strong and powerful and continuous. Think for a moment how far a child's supernatural welfare depends upon the treatment it receives at the hands of its mother. Or, think how sons and daughters are influenced by the training and the example of their father; how the young are moulded by the old; and how subjects are led by their superiors.

Time will not permit me to enter into further particulars, let me therefore merely say that a true and ardent lover of Christ will avail himself of every opportunity of furthering the interests of his Divine Master. In one way or in another, and in season and out of

season, and both at home and abroad, he will be always "gathering" and never "scattering." His conduct, both in public and in private, will be irreproachable, and his conversation free from all taint of malice and bitterness. In temperance, sobriety, and purity, he will be an object lesson to all about him. Not only will he love and honor and prize his faith, as one of the most priceless gifts of God, but he will show an active interest in all that concerns it. He will resolve to uphold and defend it. He will make it his business to acquaint himself with the answers to at least the most prevalent and common objections and difficulties to be met with in society, and will consider it a duty "to be always ready to satisfy every one that asketh a reason of that hope which is in him." (St. Peter iii. 15.) He will also seek to help and encourage every good work or missionary enterprise, or scheme that comes in his way, by which glory may be given to God. To the poor and destitute he will be compassionate, liberal and open-handed. In fact, his habitual state of mind will be one of intense personal love of Jesus Christ, manifesting itself in a practical and zealous anxiety to do all he can to further the work of Christ among men, and to reproduce His divine image in himself. "Learn of me:"—"I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Let me, in conclusion, urge each one here present before me to realize that (whatever others may do) he personally is called upon, and invited by Christ Himself to cooperate with Him, to share His labors, and to win souls to sancity of life. Let him grow in the full consciousness of the responsibilities of his position and become more and more sensible of the fact that, if he labor not with Him, he is most certainly thwarting and opposing Him, and siding with His enemy, the devil.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Uses of Temptation

Text:—"Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee."—(*Tob. xii.* 13.)

ONE of the most obvious purposes of temptation is to lay open and expose the innate workings of the human heart, and to disclose to us our utter helplessness and infirmity when we are foolish enough to rely upon our own resolutions. "Without me," our Lord declares, "you can do nothing." If, on the other hand, St. Paul says: "I can do all things," he is careful to add: "*through Him who comforteth me,*" and not by virtue of his own strength.

If St. Peter fell, and fell deeply, it was because, instead of trusting in God, he trusted in himself. Had he realized his misery and want of courage, he would have addressed himself to God in earnest prayer; he would have implored Him to take pity on his weakness, and to strengthen his resolution: and God would have stood by him like a strong tower and would have enabled him to vanquish every difficulty. For, if God be with us, who shall be against us? That this is no mere surmise is proved by the facts of history. We have seen that St. Peter by himself was unable to cope with the slightest difficulty, or to overcome the smallest temptations. He trembled at the challenge of a serving maid, and meanly denied all knowledge of his Divine Master, declaring even with curses and oaths that he knew nothing of Him.

But look at the same Peter after he had learned his lesson. Consider his conduct when he had ceased to lean upon himself and had learned to place all his trust in God. He is a totally different being.

Instead of denying His Lord and Master, we see him boldly and fearlessly standing forth and proclaiming his doctrine to the multitudes who came to hear

him. So that the chief priests and the ancients threatened him with the severest penalties if he dared to preach any more. Did he tremble and desert immediately? No. How is it that he who so readily fell before a weak woman, now resists even the state officials, armed with supreme authority? The reason is Peter is no longer alone; God is with him by His grace, and supplies him with a supernatural courage so that he openly declares that they may do what they pleased, but that he will not desist, since he must obey God rather than man. As a consequence he was cast into prison and loaded with heavy chains.

Nor is this all. Later on an opportunity is given him not only of suffering, but even of dying in defence of his faith, and, wonderful to relate, he bears the ordeal with the most heroic constancy and the most exemplary courage. He who trembled at the voice of a weak woman now stands firm and defiant before all the gathered force of imperial Rome. It was under the Emperor Nero, one of the cruelest tyrants that ever reigned, that he suffered martyrdom. He was brought before the Governor of Rome, and having with splendid courage confessed his faith he was condemned to die. They first stripped this venerable old saint and scourged him severely with rods, but as he remained steadfast in his loyalty to Christ, they proceeded with the utmost cruelty to carry out the further sentence of crucifixion. Now who, let me ask, would imagine for one moment that this can be the same Apostle who some years previously flinched before the challenge of a serving maid: yea, the very same who cursed and swore that he neither knew Jesus, nor had anything to do with Him? He was indeed changed! And because he no longer trusted in himself, but trusted now in God alone, God gave him the victory. So great was his humility, that though willing and glad was he now to die for the love of his Saviour, that he did not consider himself worthy to die in the same manner: so he petitioned his executioners, who were about to crucify him, to

lay him on the cross with his head downwards (A. D. 67). Thus he exemplified in his own person the lessons that temptation teaches us, *viz.*, both the weakness of man when left to himself, and his irresistible strength when God is by to help and comfort him. A small temptation will overcome us when alone, but even the greatest will not move us if supported by God's grace.

Let us apply that lesson to ourselves and never cease to implore God's grace and help in all our difficulties: for it is His grace alone that will render us victorious. "My grace is sufficient for thee." What other results follow from temptation? What other purposes do they serve? If properly used they are of immense service as a means of acquiring a greater sanctification. Trials and temptations serve, on the one hand, to increase and to purify and to enrich, yet further such virtues as we already possess and, on the other hand, they bring into existence certain other virtues which, without temptation, would be absolutely and wholly unknown.

Consider, in the first place, that every virtue, if it is to grow and expand, must be exercised; and that temptation affords special opportunities for this purpose; and, further, that the greater the difficulties it encounters and struggles with and overcomes, the stronger and the more intense the virtue becomes.

Take any instance you please. Let us say, for example, the case of Abraham. His faith was much above the average. Indeed, it was so exceptionally strong and vigorous, that the Holy Spirit of God makes a special reference to it. St. Paul goes out of his way to speak of him, saying: "Abraham believed God, and it was reputed to him unto justice." (Rom. iv. 3.)

Abraham's faith was strong and vigorous and exceedingly pleasing to God, because he exercised it amid great difficulties.

As a feeble flame manifests its weakness by being blown out and utterly extinguished in a storm of wind, so, on the other hand, a strong fire shows forth its

strength by burning and blazing with ever-increasing fierceness as the storm grows more violent. So is it with human virtue. The weak and pusillanimous go under, so soon as trial and tribulation come upon them, while the strong develope yet greater strength and become day by day more full of vigor and resolution.

Take Abraham as an instance in point: In the first place he lived in a perverse and adulterous generation and among the inhabitants of Chanaan, who possessed no knowledge of the true God, but worshipped dumb idols. Yet he never allowed their example to pervert his mind or his heart, which shows that he was a valiant servant of God, for it is comparatively easy to keep good and virtuous when we have good examples all around us, and when we are stimulated by the sanctity of others, but when we are surrounded by evil men, who despise our religion and ridicule what we hold sacred, it requires a very robust faith to keep ourselves innocent and unspotted from the world. But in addition to this general trial of faith Abraham's faith was put to the test in a much more searching manner by God himself. Let me point to just two instances:

The first occurred when Abraham was already 99 years old. He was sitting one day about noon at the door of his tent, when he saw three men approaching. These, he afterwards discovered, were messengers from God. And after they had received hospitality at his hands, they told him that they would return that way in about a years' time, but they announced to him that before that date, that is to say, in less than a year, he who was childless would have a son.

Now for a man of 99 to have a son born to him was a thing altogether unheard of and could scarcely be brought about without a miracle. In fact it seemed such a preposterous idea that Sara, Abraham's wife, who was nearly as old as her husband, could not conceal her incredulity and simply "laughed behind the door of the tent." (Gen. xviii. 10.) It was a great

trial of Abraham's faith, but, unlike his wife, he did not hesitate to accept the assurance, knowing full well that God who has made the laws of nature can also suspend or altar or revoke or reverse them as he pleases, and that, with Him, nothing is impossible or difficult.

In due course the son was born and he was named Isaac. But no sooner was he grown up than Abraham had to submit to a yet more tremendous trial of faith.

God, who is the supreme Lord and sovereign, and holds within His hands the keys of life and of death, commanded Abraham to slay his own son. He said: "Take thy only begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision, and there thou shalt offer him for a holocaust upon one of the mountains that I shall show thee."

Here was indeed a terrible trial that must have taxed Abrahama's faith and loyalty and obedience to the uttermost. Isaac was not merely Abraham's son, but he was his only son whom he loved with a passionate love. He was the joy and the delight of his old age, and his affections were rivetted upon him. And now he is commanded to put him to death. How could he bring himself to obey so difficult a command?

But it was not merely a trial of obedience and of loyalty. It was also a trial of faith.

For observe: God had promised Abraham a numerous posterity, and that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. But if this promise were to be fulfilled, it could be only through his son Isaac. Yet now he is commanded to put him to death; *i. e.*, to sacrifice that very son through whom alone he could have any hope of descendants. This looked very much like a contradiction and the destruction of all his hopes. Abraham might well say to himself: I have only one son, and there is no chance of my having another at my age, as I am nearly 120. If then I slay him, how am I to become the father of many nations? How is this prophecy to become true? How are my

descendants to be as numerous as the stars in the heavens? Or, rather, how am I to have any descendants at all?

The thing seemed impossible. An ordinary man would have staggered beneath such a trial of faith. But Abraham never faltered. He could not explain nor unravel the difficulty, but was perfectly satisfied that if God makes a promise He will keep it. Even though it should be by restoring Isaac to life again after being slain. He might not be able to explain, but he was quite certain that God could not prove to be untruthful. There was but one thing wholly and absolutely impossible, and that was that God should not keep His word. So he immediately proceeded to prepare to carry out God's command. He saddled an ass, and cut the wood for the holocaust and journeyed three days to Mount Moria, where he was to sacrifice his son. (Imagine what a journey this must have been. With what a heavy heart Abraham must have set out. How the tears must have rolled down his aged face—and the son would wonder at his father's grief.)

Then we know the sequel: and how an angel appeared and staid his hand just in time: "Lay not thy hand on the boy, neither do thou anything to him, for I know that thou fearest God and hast not spared thy only begotten son for my sake."

The youth was spared, and when he had grown to nearly forty he married the beautiful and virtuous Rebecca, and the promise made to Abraham was renewed to them; but their faith must have been sorely tried too, for, though these descendants were to be as numerous as the stars, yet year after year passed, and they had not a single child. It was not till they had been married twenty years that Esau was born, and then Jacob: and so God's words began to be fulfilled.

Thus God tries His children and tests their confidence and exercises their virtue.

These are facts which should be of great comfort to

us and should help us to bear up more bravely against the difficulties and trials of daily life.

To live as we are living in troubled times, to see the Church attacked, and to hear harsh and resentful words uttered against her teaching is most trying and may test the robustness of our faith. But we may take advantage even of adversity. The misfortune in our case generally is that we are too slow to profit by the opportunities that are given us. Instead of turning them to account, and drawing fruit from them, we allow them to become occasions of sin.

Perhaps we have to deal with a disagreeable and uncongenial companion. Some one who is apt to make us angry or vexed. Now it would no doubt be far pleasanter to have to do with some one more congenial. But it would not be the same exercise of virtue. "If you love those only," says our Lord, "who love you, you are no better than the heathen—a thing any one can do. But far more than that is expected of Christians: "do good to those who hate you; love those who persecute and calumniate you, that you may be true children of my Father who is in Heaven."

So again. We are apt to take dislike to certain persons. We are jealous or envious of them. Or we think them proud or haughty, or overbearing; or for some reason or another we feel a strong inclination to say harsh things about them, or to belittle them in the eyes of others, or to exaggerate their faults and failings. Now so far as the inclination goes, there is no sin, since, presumably, we cannot help it. But, the momentous point is, how are we going to deal with the inclination. Are we going to indulge it, or are we going to make a sacrifice of our own evil desires for God's sake?

In these and in countless other ways, we meet with opportunities of overcoming temptation, and of proving our love of God. Now, it is quite certain that such glorious chances of increasing our merit, and of adding to our future reward are the results not of chance, but of God's thoughtful and loving Providence. It is for

us to recognize His merciful purpose, and to take full advantage of each occasion as it arises.

We may have allowed many a golden opportunity to pass by without heeding it. We may have lost beyond recovery many a splendid God-given chance. But be of good courage. However remiss you may have been in the past, form now a strong resolution to turn all such occasions to your spiritual profit in the future, and to make a generous use of every stepping stone in order to mount upon it a higher degree of virtue and perfection.

PASSION SUNDAY

Christ and the World

Text:—"Which of you shall convince me of sin?"—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

OUR Divine Lord, turning to the Jews, boldly asks: "Which of you can convince me of sin?" What wonderful words to hear pronounced by human lips! Here Jesus Christ openly challenges His enemies to point to any violation of the Law of God in His life or conduct. He hands over to their scrutiny His whole person, His words and deeds and general conduct, and defies them to discover any fault that needs correcting, any passion that needs checking, any vice that calls for suppression. Who else but Jesus, the God-man, can claim exemption from all sin and imperfection? In any other man but Jesus Christ such a claim would be itself a great sin; for it would indicate not only culpable ignorance, but intense pride.

But, in the case of God-incarnate, it was but the simple and absolute truth. His infinite sanctity rendered even the mere shadow of sin an impossibility. For, though He took upon Himself our fallen nature, and all its miseries and sufferings, yet He excepted that moral guilt, with which the whole race was contaminated.

He declared Himself to be without sin, and when accused, He boldly challenged his accusers to prove the truth of their charges. In reality, He might have done much more. He might have declared Himself not only without sin, but incapable of sin, in short impeccable.

Indeed Jesus Christ came down to this sin-stained earth of ours not only to redeem us from sin and hell, but also to be our model and example. "Learn of Me. I am the way, the truth and the life." Hence one of the noblest and most profitable studies for any

one aiming at perfection is that of the Life and the labors of the eternal Son of God. His thoughts, His words, His actions, His dealing with His disciples and with His enemies, no less than with His friends, reflect the perfection of His character and disposition. He stands before us as the one perfect mirror of perfection. It is in the contemplation of Him and His daily life that the great saints have learned the secret of true piety and heroic sanctity. It is in Him that, all who would advance in virtue, will find the most admirable and efficient Teacher. So satisfied was the great Apostle St. Paul of this that he did not hesitate to declare to the Corinthians that it was all-sufficing. "I judge not myself to know anything amongst you," he says, "but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.)

Jesus Christ is a model so perfect and so exalted that no one can ever hope to attain to the same degree of perfection. But this must not discourage us. For though we can never approach the sanctity of God incarnate, we can always advance nearer and nearer, so long as life lasts. Indeed we are expressly assured by the inspired writer that "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day." (Prov. iv. 18.) And, in our daily efforts to advance, it is an immense advantage to have ever before us an infinitely perfect example to spur us ever onwards and upwards in the right direction, even though we can never hope to reach to the summit of such unapproachable heights.

It is not enough, of course, to merely contemplate the infinitely holy character of Christ. We must also harken to His words and be ready to embrace and to act up to His teaching. It is this readiness to put into practice what He teaches that proves that we are in very truth the children of God. "He that is of God, heareth the words of God," is the principle laid down by Christ Himself. Let us apply that principle to ourselves, and then we shall discover if we may justly number ourselves among His loyal followers and dis-

ciples. We are not ignorant of His doctrine. We know that He demands of us purity, sobriety, honesty in our dealings with our neighbors, as well as the habit of prayer and regularity in approaching the Sacraments, and so forth. Now, if we pay no attention to His words. If we take no trouble to obey His voice, but turn a deaf ear to His most solemn warnings, then we are none of His. "He who is of God, heareth the words of God. He that neglecteth or despises the word of God is not of God."

How did the Jews receive Christ's words, and what reply did they make to His sacred admonitions? Did they accept His reproof? Did they acknowledge their disobedience, and promise, in future at least, to conform their conduct to His teaching? Nothing of the kind. They were angry and enraged at His words, and let their rage get the better of them. They sought to excuse their own sin by hurling against Him the most abominable accusations. They acused Him of being a Samaritan, and of being possessed by the devil. Christ had already challenged them to point to a single sin or a single fault in Him; but as they could discover none, they deemed it more prudent to bring a general accusation against Him and to say that He was possessed.

Such accusations were simply the effect of their hatred. They well knew that one so holy, so wholly free from all taint of sin, and in whom they could not discover any moral fault, could not really be possessed by the devil. But hatred speaks without reflection. It seeks only to say what is foul and insulting and wicked, without troubling about anything else.

The same conduct is followed by the enemies of God at the present day. It is enough to be innocent and pure and true to one's faith, to excite the hostility and enmity of the worldling and the scoffer. Whosoever walks in the footsteps of Christ will assuredly be treated in a similar manner. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,"

says the great St. Paul. (2 Tim. iii. 12.) The more exemplary one's life is, the more it becomes an object of censure; for vice will never forgive the reproach and the silent condemnation which it feels in the presence of virtue. But the true servant of God will know how to draw consolation even from the malevolence and persecution of his detractors. For, far above the voices of his enemies he will hear the divine voice of Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth, exclaiming: "Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Be glad and rejoice, for behold your reward is great in Heaven." (Luke vi. 22, 23.) Thus, in spite of the enmity and opposition of the world and of the many other trials that await him, the just man pursues the even tenor of his way, and supported by a good conscience and the glorious promises of Christ at last reaches the Home of eternal felicity above.

I say the glorious promises of Christ. Now one of the most important of these promises is contained in the words of to-day's Gospel. Our Lord, after denying that He had a devil, and after declaring that He honored His Heavenly Father, whereas His accusers had dishonored Him, goes on to say: "Amen, amen, I say to you, if any man keep my word, he shall not see death forever." What a truly magnificent recompense! Who, but God alone, could reward obedience by the gift of immortality? The world is ready enough to make promises, but what a difference there is between the promises of God and those of the world! The world promises but does not fulfil its promises; and even what it does promise is necessarily of short duration and limited to the present life. On the other hand, what God promises is of infinite value in itself, and what is more important still, is destined to endure forever and ever.

Yet, in spite of this the great mass of men run after perishable rather than after eternal things. They are more ready to worship the world that promises them

sensual indulgences, which pass like smoke, and the short-lived satisfaction of their evil passions, than they are to worship God who throws open before them the golden gates of Heaven itself, and offers Himself as their "reward exceeding great," for the whole length and breadth of eternity. No wonder the Holy Spirit declares "the number of fools to be infinite," since "all seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." (Philip. ii. 21.)

When the Jews heard this marvellous promise of immortality, they wondered exceedingly and grew more angry than ever. "Now," said they, "we *know* thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets, and Thou sayest that if any man keep Thy word, he shall not see death for ever. Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets, who are dead? Whom dost Thou make thyself?"

Blinded by their hatred, the Jews either would not understand or could not understand that Jesus Christ referred not to an earthly but to a heavenly and supernatural immortality. They pretended that our Lord was making a foolish statement. That He was asserting that the good and the just would live forever *in this world,* and that, of course, would look very much like a condemnation of all the greatest saints and heroes of the old Law, for they had all eventually died. But the Jews were always striving to "catch Him in His speech." Indeed it is the way of evil-minded men to put a false interpretation on words, and to represent one as saying what is in reality quite contrary to one's thought. They first of all make out that we have enunciated a doctrine which we have never held; and then they proceed to abuse us, and to find fault with us for having done so.

Had the Jews been honest; had they not been blinded by their hatred and jealousy, they would have recognized Jesus as God incarnate; for they might have seen that all the prophesies in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Him, and that He was clearly the Messias so accurately and so fully described by

the prophets. They would then have understood, not only that Christ was infinitely greater than Abraham or Moses, but also that the kind of immortality that He had promised to all who should keep His word, was already being enjoyed by the saintly Patriarchs of old; an immortality immeasurably superior to any purely terrestrial immortality. And they would have realized that His words contained no sinister reflection on the personal sanctity of their "Father Abraham," and the other patriarchs whom they indeed honored, but whom Christ honored far more.

But persons who allow themselves to be carried away by passion are incapable of sound reasoning. They see in their enemy just what they desire to see, and consequently in the case before us, the Jews fully persuaded themselves that Jesus, in some sense, was under the influence of the devil.

But our Blessed Lord continued His discourses, and exasperated them still more. For He said: "Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he might see my day; he saw it and was glad." By this our Lord referred to the faith of Abraham, to whom the coming of a Redeemer was revealed. Abraham looked forward through the centuries, and actually *saw in prophetic vision* the advent of the Messias into this world. He saw, "and was glad," for the incarnation of the Son of God meant everything to him and to his people. But the listening Jews utterly failed to seize the true sense of Christ's words, which were a stumbling block to them. "The Jews therefore said to Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?"

Jesus replied: "Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am." By these remarkable words, Jesus openly asserted His divinity. He practically told them that He did not begin to exist, as other men exist, merely from the time of His earthly birth; but that He is ever present throughout the centuries. In His divine nature there is no past nor future. No; there is but one continual present. Fi-

nite beings change. Creatures are subject to every species of alteration and modification, but the Creator is ever the self same. "Yesterday and to-day and the same for ever." "Before Abraham was made, I am." The fact is that Jesus Christ, according to His divine nature, had no beginning. He always is. Before the angels were created, He is. Before the world and the firmament of heaven had been colled into existence. He is. We do not say "He was," because that would imply that something had passed. But with God there is nothing past; nothing future; He always *is*. Creatures have a past and a future; but God has only a continuous present. Hence these words of our Lord were such a clear declaration of His divinity, that the Jews, who refused to believe in Him, considered He had blasphemed. Accordingly, "they took up stones to cast at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple."

Jesus Christ, being God, was never in the power of the Jews, except in so far as He deliberately wished to be. Had His enemies been allowed to follow their own inclination, they would undoubtedly have now stoned Him to death. But His hour had not come. Besides, although He had resolved to offer up His life, yet stoning was not the special kind of death which He had chosen, and no one could in any way interfere with His divine plans. St. John narrates how He openly claimed power over His life, saying: "I lay down my life. . . . No man taketh it away from Me; but I lay it down myself, and I have power to lay it down; and I have power to take it up again." (John x. 18.) On this occasion Christ frustrated the murderous designs of the Jews by withdrawing Himself from their midst. "He hid Himself and went out of the temple." And they sought for Him in vain.

In the meantime Jesus Christ continued to pass from village to village, and from town to town, instructing the multitude that pressed around Him and preaching the great truths of the Gospel. Many were won over by the sight of the wonders that He worked,

and by the marvellous miracles that He performed on behalf of the blind, the deaf, the halt and the lame, and even the dead whom He raised to life by a mere word. Many were also attracted by the evident sanctity of His life and by the sublime beauty and holiness of His doctrine. These indeed believed in Him and followed Him and hung upon His words. But Alas! The great majority were too worldly and carnal to be influenced. Although it is true that they expected the Messiah to come into the world, and that their study of the Sacred Books had made them familiar with the many prophesies that foretold His advent, yet they failed to recognize Him when He actually appeared. The fact is, they had formed an altogether false conception of the character and qualities and condition of the Redeemer. They pictured Him to themselves as a great and mighty Sovereign who should boldly assert His power and dazzle the world by His majesty and irresistible authority. They looked upon Him as one who should lead them to victory and restore their lost inheritance and make of them a mighty nation. In short, they expected an *earthly* triumph rather than a heavenly one. And could not recognize the all-powerful and irresistible Messiah of their dreams in the lowly and humble Son of the carpenter. Though the inspired Scriptures spoke clearly enough of His lowliness and of His poverty and sufferings and depicted Him as "despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity"; and even as "a worm and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." (Isaias lii. 3.) Yet they seemed not to understand these words, but clung to quite other texts which really referred to Christ's future triumphs, *after the work of the redemption should be accomplished,* and when the last Judgment should have taken place. I may point to such texts as the following from the Book of Daniel: "He gave Him power and glory and a kingdom; and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve Him; His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken

away, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed" (vii. 14). And to such words as are to be found in Isaias xli. 2: "He shall give the nations in His sight, and He shall rule over kings; He shall give them as the dust to His sword, and as stubble driven by the wind to His bow." If these and similar texts be applied to Christ before His Resurrection rather than after, they would certainly lead to disastrous consequences. The result in fact was that the Jews were wholly misled by their false reading of the inspired word, and came to regard Jesus Christ as an imposter and a fraud. Envy and jealousy and a diabolical hatred blinded them still further, so that their desire to bring about His death increased as time wore on.

At last, after some three years of apostolic labors, Jesus Christ permitted His enemies to satisfy their crulty and their vindictiveness against Him. He would fulfil the prophesy made concerning Him ages before by Isaias, and be led "like a lamb to the slaughter."

The actual opportunity arose when Judas, one of our Lord's own chosen Apostles, sought to betray Him. Judas had for a long time been an Apostle in appearance only. He had become heartily tired of the apostolic life, with its wanderings, its burdens, its vexations and its persecutions. His former love for Christ had grown cold. In its stead there arose firstly an indifference, then a certain irritability and disgust. He well knew that the Jews were plotting and scheming against Christ, and he began to fear lest he, as one of His disciples, would have to stand a part of the brunt of the threatened persecution. He resolved therefore to save himself, and by the same move gain both friends and money. Hence we see him hastening to offer his services to the members of the Council, and to show them how they might conveniently capture the person of his Divine Master. Judas therefore asked: "What will you give me, and I will reliver Him unto you?" They offered thirty pieces of silver, and the nefarious bargain was closed.

In due course the Jews collected a large band, armed with swords and clubs, and placing Judas at their head, they marched, between eleven and twelve o'clock at night by the nearest route to the garden of Olives. As they knew that our Lord was not alone, but that many of His disciples were with Him, the Roman soldiers, who perhaps had never seen Him, asked for some signs by which they might know whom to apprehend. So Judas offered to give them one, saying: "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He." There is no word strong enough to describe such hideous hypocrisy and such base deceit and ingratitude. "To salute a friend means to wish him all that is good. But this salute was the cunning of the wolf approaching in sheep's clothing; it was the cunning of the serpent hiding in the grass; the cruelty of the assassin carrying the dagger in his bosom. Honey is indeed on his lips, but gall and wormwood in his heart; a friendly smile is on his face, and black hatred in his soul. He betrays his supreme Lord and Master to a ghastly death, and he does it under the mask of a devoted disciple, saying: "Hail, Rabbi."

The awful consequences of this outrageous act will be unfolded before us during the course of next week. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday, and the Church in her wisdom has set aside that week as a season of special commemoration of the sufferings and the death of Jesus Christ. Each day of that week, but more especially the last three days, are consecrated to the Passion of the world's Redeemer. We shall follow Him from the moment of His betrayal through all the stages of His condemnation, His scourgings, His crowning with thorns, and His carrying of the Cross, up to the final act of crucifixion when He shed the last drop of His precious Blood for sinners, and, with a loud voice, commended Himself into the hands of His Heavenly Father and "gave up the ghost." And while we contemplate His unparalleled sufferings we shall learn more and more clearly the two great lessons they are especially calculated to impart, *viz.*, the

boundless love with which Christ loves us, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the enormity of sin which caused Him to submit to such an excruciating and to such an ignominious death.

"Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his *friends*." True; but Jesus Christ, whose love was not human only but divine, surpassed and exceeded all who had suffered before Him, for He laid down His life not for "his friends" only, but for *His enemies*. Yea! For His persecutors and even for His very executioners and for all who had ever rebelled against Him or who should ever rebel and break His commandments.

Let us then resolve to increase our love of God and our hatred of sin. Let us ask Jesus Christ by virtue of His bitter Passion and atrocious agony to grant us a more ardent charity and a more profound contrition, so that we may bewail our numerous offences and direct all our affections toward Him, Who loved us more even than His own Life.

PALM SUNDAY*

The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Text:—"Bearing His own cross, He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, where they crucified Him."—(*John xix.* 18.)

DEARLY beloved brethren, before entering on the solemn subject, which is to occupy us this morning, I must ask you, in spirit, to turn back the hands of the great clock of Time some nineteen hundred years, and to transport yourselves to the distant land of Palestine.

We are in the country of the Jews. The singularly clear atmosphere and the bright, cloudless sky tell us plainly enough that we are dwelling in a favored clime. We take our stand upon the little hill of Olives, and look down over the plain beneath. A little to one side stretches the sombre valley of Kedron. From where we are placed we can almost catch the murmur of the stream that rushes through its reeds and sedges, to empty itself at last into the Dead Sea sparkling in the distance. The wind blows cold through the graceful palm trees and bends their long leaves, while their lissom branches sway to and fro in the freshening breeze; and men gather their long loose robes around them, for the air strikes chill at this early hour of the morning.

Beneath our feet stretches out the beautiful city of Jerusalem, its domed temple, its turrets and pointed minarets burnished by the first rays of the rising sun. Though early in the day, the streets are already all astir, and many men and women are hastening, with

* It is very rare to have a sermon on Palm Sunday, owing to the length of the service, and because the Passion, which is sung, seems to supply the place of a set discourse. The following is, therefore, more suitable for Good Friday. Where the three Hours are preached, it will be found to form a suitable introduction to the usual considerations on Our Lord's Seven Last Words.

eager anxious movement, towards the Palace of the Governor. In the open Court, before the praetorium, we see already gathered a goodly throng. Conspicuous amongst them are the priests, scribes, Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law in their brilliant costumes and many-colored robes; while ever and anon we may catch the gleam of a Roman helmet or the glitter of a soldier's lance.

The murmur of many voices resounds through the air; the deep accents of bearded men blending strangely with the shriller notes of the women and children fall with a discordant cadence upon the attentive ear, while the hurried gestures of the crowd and the rapid movement of hand and head betray an unusual interest and excitement.

Now a heavy door is heard to creak on its hinges, and immediately every voice is hushed. The immense sea of heads is turned upwards toward the gallery which crowns the summit of a flight of steps above the Court. Then Pilate, the supreme judge, steps out on to the landing before the infuriated rabble that surge like a turbid restless sea at his feet. The soldiers fall back a few paces and clear a space so that Jesus, the condemned, is clearly visible to all. Pilate, then taking Jesus, leads Him up through the praetorium to the balcony before all the people. And there, divested of His garments, and with the marks of the cruel scourge upon Him, He stands, the observed of all observers.

His most sacred body is flayed and wounded in many places, and torn by lashes and cords, with nothing to screen it from the inquisitive eyes of the populace but the old rag of a scarlet marshal cloak, which the soldiers have thrown around Him, in mockery and derision. His Head is crowned with sharp thorns; His Hands are bound together, and between His fingers a reed is thrust in scorn. His eyes are filled with tears that ever and anon flow over and mingle with the blood trickling from His bleeding brow. His cheeks are deadly pale, yet streaked with blood and

defiled with spittle, which they have vomited into it. He trembles as much from weakness and exhaustion as from cold, and His whole form is bowed down and bent with the intolerable weight of insult and of injury. At length Pilate, pointing out this most pitiable figure to the assembled multitude, exclaims: "BEHOLD THE MAN."

No word of sympathy or compassion is uttered in reply to this heartrending appeal. On the contrary. The fire of passion and of diabolical hatred glows with a fiercer flame, and kindles afresh in every eye. Almost before the governor has ceased to speak, the priests and the people open wide their mouths and the still air rings and reverberates with the deicidal cry: "CRUCIFY HIM, CRUCIFY HIM!"

Far away over the spacious city the words are borne, and every street and square seems to re-echo with the awful sound. Many a tender heart beats faster, and many a noble soul is filled and tortured with grief at the cruel and bloodthirsty cry.

Even Pilate himself stands aghast at this unlooked-for result of his overtures. Yes; even this pagan is amazed that the contemplation of so much misery cannot soften their hearts and extinguish their envy. He is not alone astonished at their hardness, he is enraged and disgusted at their unspeakable brutality and at their implacable vindictiveness, so that filled with vexation and disdain, like a man whose plans have miscarried and been thwarted and frustrated, he exclaims: "THEN TAKE HIM YOU AND CRUCIFY HIM, FOR I FIND NO CAUSE IN HIM." But they are not to be appeased or put off by such words, and shout more vehemently than before: "WE HAVE A LAW, AND ACCORDING TO OUR LAW, THIS MAN OUGHT TO DIE, BECAUSE HE HAS MADE HIMSELF THE SON OF GOD." But Pilate offered no reply. Then, seeing that Pilate still hesitates, and that he is still endeavoring to rescue Jesus from their fury, the Jews cry out threateningly and menace him with evil con-

sequences to himself. "IF THOU GIVEST LIBERTY TO THIS MAN, THOU ART NOT A FRIEND OF CAESAR, FOR WHOSOEVER MAKETH HIMSELF A KING IS AN ENEMY OF CAESAR."

O! my brethren, then it is not Justice, but the friendship of Caesar that is to sway this pagan judge! Pilate is dependent on Caesar, and subject to his authority. Consequently, this threat produces its effect. He fears for his place and his office if he should incur the displeasure of so powerful a ruler. Pilate then calls for water, and, washing his hands, tries to appease his conscience by exclaiming in the hearing of them all: "I AM INNOCENT AND HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS JUST MAN." Upon which once more the Courts and corridors resound with the shouts of: "HIS BLOOD BE UPON US AND UPON OUR DESCENDANTS."

Pilate finds he cannot prevail, so, weakly and infamously bowing before the storm, he proceeds to pronounce the sentence of death against the Author of all life, and directs that Jesus shall be dragged along the public streets, preceded by a crier proclaiming His crime to the place where the worst malefactors and murderers are usually executed, and that there, despoiled of all His raiment, He shall be fastened to a Cross by iron nails driven through His feet and hands; and that, being thus nailed, He shall be left to hang there until he is dead, because He is a blasphemer and seditious person, stirring up the people and making Himself king.

The capital sentence is no sooner pronounced than the report spreads like wild-fire throughout the length and breadth of Jerusalem. Men are seen stopping one another in the street to break the news that even now Jesus, the great preacher, the renowned prophet whom they all know so well, and to whose voice they have listened so frequently during the past three years, has been seized and brought before the magistrates, AND CONDEMNED TO DIE; yea, even at this

very moment, while they are yet speaking, the executioners are forcing Him along up the steep road to Calvary.

The whole city is aroused at the news. The many thousands of strangers who have flooded the city of Jerusalem to celebrate the festival of the Passover, as well as its usual inhabitants are inquiring incredulously of one another if He, who is about to suffer death, can be the same Jesus of Nazareth who cured the sick; who had stilled the storm on the lake of Galilee; fed the multitudes in the desert, and restored the halt and the infirm to health, and even called the dead from the charnel house? Will He allow Himself to be taken, they demand of one another; will He not, by some stupendous miracle, confound and humble His adversaries? Oh! Who will describe the tumult, the confusion, the excitement now reigning throughout Jerusalem; and the various remarks and opinions and expressions of surprise upon all men's tongues.

In the meantime the crowds grow thicker and denser. Presently a general movement is made towards the chief gate of the city. Multitudes surge along through the congested streets and eddy like a turbid stream around the winding alleys and by-ways toward the spot where Jesus is to pass, so that they may catch at least a passing glimpse of Him. Meanwhile, in the Court of Pilate, the doleful procession forms and sets forth. Jesus is led by the executioners under an escort of soldiers through the Court to the exit of the praetorium. There, by the gate, lies in readiness the rough and heavy Cross upon which He is so soon to be stretched in agony. This they lay upon His weak and bleeding shoulders, beneath which He staggers with the utmost difficulty. For a moment we lose sight of Him; then, in a moment more, He emerges into the open street where thousands of inquisitive and idle persons line the way. See how they press and jostle one another in their efforts to get a look at the well-known form. See how they rivet their gaze upon Him and wonder at His bleeding and torn face, His

palled brow, His bedraggled hair, His trembling step and gasping breath. He is so changed that many can hardly recognize Him. And, what is their attitude of mind? Some few indeed compassionate Him, but the countenance of the majority are black with hate and envious cruelty.

The instruments of torture, such as the great iron nails, the heavy hammers to drive them in, the ropes and ladders, and the glittering spear, are carried along in the procession before the bowed form of the world's Redeemer, and sufficiently reveal to all, the nature of the death He is about to undergo, while the voice of the crier is heard at regular intervals above the buzz and murmur of the crowd proclaiming the nature of His guilt.

So ponderous is the Cross, and so weak is our Saviour, and so constantly is He being jolted by the pressure of the multitude that He is in constant danger of falling. At last, down He actually sinks prostrate on the ground beneath His heavy burden. Then there is a pause. The sight-seers gather around Him. The soldiers force them back, while Jesus rises with inexpressible pain and again the Cross is laid upon Him. With footsteps slow and feeble, and knees trembling with fatigue He advances, amid the jeers and insults of the Jews, and the heartless blows of the executioners and the tears and bewailing of devout and pious women, till, in issuing from the great gate of the city, He falls heavily a second time, and then, a little further on, a third time.

At last, after many a bitter pang and many a merciless blow, the Eternal Son of God reaches the summit of the hill of Calvary. The Cross is flung on to the ground. The beauteous form of the God-made-man is rudely stripped. He, upon whom Angels love to gaze, is thrown down, silent and unresisting and as meek "as a lamb in the hands of its shearers."

Contemplate Him there, my brethren, at the moment of His most bitter anguish. His divine hands, never raised except in blessing, never extended save

to cure or to console, are pressed against the wood, and long, jagged nails are forced against the palms, and with an agony which no words can adequately describe, driven through those tender members, tearing and rending tendon and muscle and nerve and quivering flesh. Then the sacred feet, so delicately and so wonderously made, are held down while the executioners inflict the same indescribable agony upon them, as with blow after blow of the hammer, they drive in the nails.

Agonizing as this martyrdom is, it is little as compared to the writhing pain that sends a shudder through every beholder, while the Cross, with its living burden fastened to it, streaming with blood from the newly-made wounds, is raised aloft and then allowed to fall into its socket with a jolt. The slightest touch on the raw and livid flesh can hardly be endured, but Jesus supports the whole weight of His body upon His gaping wounds. Yet, not a cry escapes Him. Not a complaint, not a murmur.

It is hard even to pray, my brethren, while enduring acute suffering; and if a prayer is sometimes forced from a martyr's lips under such circumstances, it is usually a prayer for patience or for release from pain, or for fortitude and strength to persevere on to the end. But, Jesus, after the long night of mental anguish, and the mockery of six successive trials, followed by a Roman scourging, a crowning of thorns, and insults and blows, with the filthy spittle of the brutal soldiery still on His cheeks, and with His mouth still swollen with the blow from the soldier's mailed fist—Jesus, I say, after all this opens His divine lips, not to call for vengeance, not even to plead for a speedy termination of His sufferings, but to intercede for sinners. Yea, to beg mercy of His heavenly Father for His very executioners. "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

While His feet and hands are writhing and burning; while every muscle is contracting and every nerve throbbing with excruciating agony, He forgets Him-

self to think only of the very men, who, of all others, seem least deserving of consideration; of those namely who have fastened Him to the infamous gibbet of the Cross. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

From the Cross He beholds indeed the Roman soldiers, whose hands are dyed with His precious Blood. He sees the Scribes and the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law still casting their looks of hatred and defiance towards Him and scoffing and insulting Him and bidding Him in mockery to come down from the Cross. And even these He does not exclude from His ardent prayer.

But, if the eyes of His body gaze upon them, the eyes of His soul, the eyes of His divine intelligence, look beyond the hill of Calvary, beyond the city of Jerusalem nestling at its feet beyond the deep blue Mediterranean placidly sleeping in the distance, far away over stormy oceans and mountain wilds, into more distant lands, in fact, into every country and kingdom of the world. In short, wherever a human heart beats, wherever a human soul lives, His divine eye rests upon him and He begs even for them mercy and pardon. One and all are included in His dying petition.

And those divine eyes that rest upon all places, rest too upon all times. Jesus Christ, the Crucified, is God as well as man, and as God the past and the future are equally present to Him. Hence, from His Cross set on the bleak mountain, He gazes through all the centuries. Clearly and distinctly He sees into the furthest future. He watches the millions as yet unborn, the good and the bad, the indifferent and the fervent. He contemplates every human creature that will ever tread the soil of this world on his way to Eternity.

He sees the distant shores of the great American continent, and the vast populations that live and labor and toil in America's busy towns and bustling hives of industry, for the most part forgetful of Him

and of all His bitter sufferings. He beholds the great cities of New York, Boston, Chicago and St. Paul, etc., with their teeming millions immersed in selfishness, the rich indulging in luxury and ease and hundreds of thousands of the poor drowned in drink, impurity and infidelity; and for them too our Loving Crucified Master prays: "Father, forgive them," etc.

I too and each one of you, my brethren, are present before Him. Yes, as God He gazes into our hearts. We too are present before Him. He thinks of us—not confusedly, not as one of a mass, but individually and one by one. Just think of it, my brethren, each one of us can truly say: From His Cross He gazes upon me and beholds my personal faults and sins and imperfections. I am before His eyes as He lifts them to His Father in Heaven. And while the big tears roll down His pallid cheeks, and His life's blood drops —splash—splash—splash on the hard rock beneath, He thinks of me and prays: "Father, forgive," etc.

Yes, the infinite God made man for love of me, condemned for me, crucified for me, dying for me—for me, who have offended Him and sinned against Him —that same God from the altar of the Cross now lifts up His voice on my behalf and demands for me grace, pardon and salvation Oh! wondrous mystery. Oh! mystery of infinite love and compassion! "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friends." True. Mere man hath not greater love, but He who is both God and man hath yet greater love, for He lays down His life for His enemies. His love exceeds all thought. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it.

(*If it be Good Friday, a short discourse on each of the Seven Words of our Lord may here be added. If "The Three Hours' Devotion" be not preached, then we may conclude as follows.*)

Thus, for three weary hours Christ's agony endures. In the meantime the miraculous darkness has been overspreading the earth like an inky veil. Though it is

still the middle of the day, yet the sky has grown black as darkest night. The sun, usually so bright and burning in the favored land of Palestine, has—seemingly—gone out. Its scorching rays, that are wont to beat down pitilessly till the heavens seem of brass and the earth of iron, are all withdrawn, and every hill and valley is wrapped in an inky shroud. A darkness that may almost be felt rests upon the whole earth. Above the Cross, in the arching heavens, the stars themselves tremble out as at midnight, and the figures on the three crosses are scarcely visible, save when the lightnings, like the flashs of a seraph's sword illuminate the scene for one moment, while the next darkness swallows it up again. In the meanwhile the earth seems to rock like a cradle and trembles to its centre, the rocks split and break asunder with a deafening report as though hell were opening beneath their feet. The whole creation seems to be in convulsions, and the very foundations of the world to be dissolving.

Then, the graves open and the dead are seen to rise and to mingle with the living; the veil of the temple is rent from the top to the bottom by an unseen power. All nature cries out in anguish and raises an alarm. and every creature testifies to the death of the Son of God and bears witness to the magnitude of the crime that is being perpetrated.

Those who stand around are stricken with fear, while terror fills their minds. They who jeered and scoffed an hour ago now tremble and cry out in their anguish. Even those whom neither argument nor reason nor miracle could convert are striking their breasts and exclaiming with the Centurian in the very excess of their terror: "This is indeed the Son of God."

Oh! If there be anything that can soften the hard heart of the sinner, if there be anything that can shatter and pulverize the ice of pride and self-love that petrifies the human heart and prevents the entry of divine grace, it is the mangled form of the infinite God-made man. Who can contemplate the evidence

of such burning love, who can witness such an excess of tenderness and generosity and compassion without feeling his own heart melt, and his eyes well over with sorrowing tears and deepest compunction for his evil deeds that have bound Jesus to the Cross.

We indeed *deserve* to suffer on account of our innumerable sins and offences. And if we have not the courage of the Saints, who were always mortifying themselves and doing penance, let us at least be willing to endure in a loving spirit such trials and tribulations as befall us by the Providence of God. Let us not shirk the cross of duty, nor seek to withdraw ourselves from the discipline of a true Christian life and the restraints that God's holy laws impose upon our evil inclinations and unruly passions. Yea, let us rather rejoice when called upon to share in some small degree in the Passion of Christ and make the most of every opportunity till at last we are able to exclaim with the great St. Paul: "God forbid that I should rejoice, save in the Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by whom I am crucified to the world and the world is crucified to me."

EASTER SUNDAY

The Meaning of the Resurrection

Text:—"If Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, and our preaching is vain, and we are still in our sins."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

WHEN the incredulous Jews demanded from Jesus Christ some proof of His divine mission, saying, "Master, we would see a sign from thee," our Lord answered: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign; and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the Prophet. For, as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." (Matt. xii. 38, 39.)

The Old Testament, my dear brethren, is full of figures, and types, and shadows of the New. Again and again we find some great event concerning our Lord's life illustrated and portrayed centuries before it occurred, in the history of the chosen people of God, the Jews. The instance before us to-day is from the prophecy of Jonas. In those inspired pages we are told how Jonas went down to Joppe and embarked for Tharsis. Having paid his fare, he went below to take his rest. "But the Lord sent a great wind into the sea," and raised a terrific tempest, so that the ship was in danger of being dashed to pieces. So great was the fear of all on board, that at last they sought to lighten the ship by casting the cargo it was carrying into the water. . . . Since the danger, however, seemed only to increase, they said, "Every one to his fellow: Come, let us cast lots, that we may discover why this evil is upon us. And they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonas." . . . "And they said to Jonas: 'What shall we do to thee, that the sea may grow calm, and that we may be secure?' And he replied: 'Take me up and cast me into the sea, and the sea shall grow calm.'" . . . "And they took Jonas and cast him

into the sea, and at once the sea ceased from raging." (Jonas i.)

"Now the Lord (the prophet goes on to say) prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonas, and Jonas was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." . . . Then "the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonas upon the dry land." (Jonas ii.)

This was indeed a great miracle, yet it was but a type of a far more stupendous miracle which was to come, *viz.*, the dwelling of our Divine Lord for three days and nights in the bowels of the earth. For as Jonas was buried for three days and nights in the belly of the whale, so Christ was buried for three days and nights in the belly of the earth. And as Jonas was "vomited forth" by the fish, on the third day, so, too, Jesus Christ sprang forth by His own power from the sepulchre on the third day. Further, as Jonas, by consenting to be thrown into the raging sea, saved the rest of the passengers and crew from the jaws of death, so our Lord by consenting to be cast into a veritable sea of pain, and suffering, and humiliation during His passion, rescued all of us from the far more terrible jaws of hell.

But for the sacrifice of Jonas the entire ship would have foundered with all hands. Similarly, but for the sacrifice of Christ, the entire world would have sunk into eternal perdition. For St. Paul assures us that "It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away." (Heb. x. 4.) So, again, as Jonas offered himself a *willing* victim, saying to the terrified mariners, "Take me, and cast me into the sea," so Christ offered Himself a *willing* victim for the sins of the world. "At the head of the book it is written . . . behold, I come to do Thy will." (Heb. 7 and 8.) Lastly, as we are told that "the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow Jonas," so the same Almighty Lord prepared a special new sepulchre to receive the body of Christ, His eternal Son.

The importance of this glorious miracle of the Resurrection is seen, not only from the fact that Christ

gave it as a sign of his authority, but because of the consequences which would follow, were it not true. On this point nothing can be clearer than the words of St. Paul himself: "If Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, and our preaching is vain, and we are still in our sins." Indeed, among the many proofs of Christ's divinity, His glorious Resurrection from the dead is the foremost and the chief. St. Ambrose calls it *primum et maximum fidei fundamentum,* the foremost and the grandest basis of our faith.

In order to satisfy even the most critical and unbelieving of the truth of the Resurrection, it is enough to prove two great facts. The first is (a) that Christ really and truly died. The second is (b) that after death He really and truly lived again.

Let us begin by establishing without doubt His death. Then we will prove His return to life. In the first place, then, call to mind that He was solemnly condemned in the public halls of justice, in presence of an immense concourse of people, who were thirsting for His Blood, and who would never have rested till they had satisfied themselves that the sentence had been actually carried out.

Before being dragged to Calvary He was most cruelly scourged and had grown weak and exhausted by loss of blood; further, from the evening of the previous day He had had nothing to eat, and was worn out with want of food. In the third place, the brutal soldiers had woven together a crown of briars and thorns, strong and sharp and long, as we see in the models kept in divers churches to the present day. And, having plaited it, they raised it up and forced it upon His head, pressing it down with great violence, until the Blood flowed anew from a hundred fresh wounds. So weak and ill-treated a body needed but little more to deprive it entirely of life, and was in no condition to face the difficult journey up the hill of Calvary, to the place of execution. Indeed, as it was, our blessed Lord fell several times under the weight of the Cross, which He was forced to carry so long as

it was at all possible. On arriving at the summit He was thrown upon the wooden beams, and huge nails were driven through His Palms and through His sacred Feet, from which the Blood oozed out and soaked the ground. Then He was lifted up and hung suspended between Heaven and earth, from His Hands and His Feet. No one could live long in that condition, however strong, and Jesus had lost all His strength by reason of the ill treatment He had already received. Hence we are not surprised to read in the inspired narrative that, "Having taken the vinegar, He said: 'It is consummated'; and bowing His head, He gave up the ghost." (John xix. 30.) Now, the sacred text goes on to say that "The Jews (because it was the Parasceve) besought Pilate that the legs of the three crucified victims might be broken; in short, that they might be put out of their misery, and the bodies taken down. They represented to Pilate that the Mosaic Law strictly demanded the burial of executed criminals before the night came on, and that it would be unbecoming to have three criminals hanging upon the Cross on the holy Easter Sabbath. Thereupon the executioners, armed with iron trimmed clubs, broke the bones of the two thieves. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was *already dead,* they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers (named Longinus) with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came forth blood and water." (John xix. 32-34.)

The soldiers had already quite satisfied themselves that He was dead, so that Longinus oversteps all bounds of humane feeling when, seizing a lance, he deliberately thrusts it through the side and heart of our Blessed Saviour. Observe the Evangelist does not say that he "wounded" it, but that he "opened it," so that there came out blood and water. Indeed, the fact that later on St. Thomas was able to put his hand into the side of our risen Lord, shows what a wound it must have been. *If not dead before, then, surely, He was dead then!* A still more unequivocal proof was the

issue of blood and water. All medical men agree that if Christ had been alive when the spear "opened His side," pure blood must have escaped from the wound; whereas it is particularly said that water as well as blood gushed from the opening. Consequently He must have been already dead. But even supposing that He had been still alive, that spear-thrust would have killed Him.

If we take into consideration the intense enmity and hatred of the Jews and the way in which they thirsted for His life, we may rest assured that they would watch most carefully to see that the sentence of death, for which they clamored, and perjured themselves, and suborned false witnesses, was carried out. So there is not a shadow of doubt about the fact. But, just for the sake of the argument, let us suppose that Jesus was only in a swoon or in a faint. How will that impossible supposition help our opponents? Not at all. For, had there been one little flickering spark of sensation left in Him after the taking down from the Cross the only chance of fanning such a feeble spark into life would have been the most careful nursing in a warm, well ventilated room, and the administration of nourishing food and proper clothing. But, instead of that, the body was wrapped in nothing but a linen winding sheet, and was laid in a cold stone sepulchre, unattended and uncared for, during the space of three days and nights. This was enough, and more than enough, to extinguish every trace of vitality, even on the wild supposition that any such traces had existed.

Yet unbelievers have the hardihood to ask us to believe not only that our Lord was still breathing, but that after His scourging, His crowning with thorns, His crucifixion, and His piercing with a spear, and three days and nights without food or clothing in a cold stone tomb, He was strong enough to rise up and roll back the stone from the entrance, and be as well and as strong as ever.

People who believe, in the face of such evidence,

that Christ did not really die, will believe anything, and are not worth considering.

But, if Christ died, it is equally clear that He rose again, immortal and impassible.

Proofs of Christ's Resurrection

We have shown that Christ truly died. To prove His Resurrection, it is sufficient to show that He lived and moved among men after the period of the Crucifixion. Let us proceed to the task.

We would first observe here, that Almighty God, who rules over all and disposes every event of life so as to secure His divine purposes, evidently made use of the very envy and mistrust and suspicion of the Jews to further the cause of Divine truth. Indeed, if the enemies of Christ had not taken such precautions, the arguments for His Resurrection would have been shorn of much of their value.

In the first place, consider the stratagems to which the Jews had recourse, in order to prevent the disciples of Christ deceiving them in the matter of His predicted rising from the tomb. So soon as they heard that Joseph of Arimathea had received permission from Pilate to take the Body of Jesus down from the Cross, and that he had wrapped it up in a clean linen cloth, and then had placed it in his own new monument, which he had hewed in a rock (Matt. xxvii. 58-60), they began to take alarm. So the next day the chief priests and the pharisees came together, and seeking an interview with Pilate, said: "Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said, while He was yet alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be guarded until the third day, lest perhaps, His disciples come and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He is risen from the dead,' and the last error shall be worse than the first." (Matt. xxvii. 62-64.) To this deputation Pilate replied: "Very well, you have a guard of your own; go, guard it as you know" (*ib.* 65), upon which they not

only placed a strong guard around the place where our Lord's sacred Body lay, but they even took the additional precaution to "seal the stone" that closed the mouth of the sepulchre, so that no one without their knowledge could possibly tamper with it, or force it away, and so rob the Body and pretend it had arisen miraculously.

But all their efforts were in vain, and served only to make our Lord's Resurrection more conspicuous and incontestable. The very men placed about the sepulchre to prevent any trick being played were the first and certainly the most impartial witnesses of the stupendous event. They saw with their own eyes the ponderous stone rolled back, and Jesus leaping triumphantly from the dark cavern hewn in the rock, glorious and impassible. No wonder the Evangelist tells us that "some of the guards hastened into the city and told the chief priests all things that had been done." (Matt. xxviii. 11.)

The priests and the ancients, and in fact all who heard the startling news, were naturally very much excited, and troubled, and alarmed. But what could they possibly do? The miracle was wrought. The prediction had been fulfilled. As Jonas was three days in the whale's belly, so Christ had been three days in the belly of the earth. And, as the whale had belched forth Jonas on the third day, hale and strong, so the grave gave up the crucified body of Jesus on the third day, full of grace and glory.

The only escape possible from their difficulty was to bribe the guards. This they immediately proceeded to do in the most barefaced way. St. Matthew informs us how they met together and discussed the whole situation. Finally they resolved to distribute hush-money among the witnesses, and to bid them hold their tongues. "Taking counsel, they gave a great sum of money to the soldiers." (*Ib.* 12.) Further, they even instructed them what to say, and invented a specious story, which they hoped, no doubt, might be accepted by the not too discriminating pop-

ulace. They made the soldiers promise to explain how "The disciples of Christ came by night and stole Him away when they were asleep." (*Ib.* 13.) Such a plea evidently did not altogether commend itself to the soldiers. They scarcely cared to accuse themselves to their chief of sleeping while on duty, and rightly feared the consequences of such pretended neglect. So the priests and the ancients promised to make it all right with the superior officer, saying: "If this comes to the governor's ears, we will persuade him and make it all right for you." (*Ib.* 14.) "So, taking the money, they did as they were taught; and this story was spread abroad among the Jews, even unto this day." (*Ib.* 15.) Surely, this account is circumstantial enough.

But quite a number of other circumstances may be pointed to as additional arguments of Christ's Resurrection, the accumulative value of which can scarcely be over-estimated.

In the first place, let us suppose that what the Jews declared were true, and that the disciples had really been able to gather in sufficient force to roll away the enormous stone that closed the entrance to the tomb, and to break the seals, *without awakening any single member of the guard of soldiers* who were watching over it, a highly incredible theory, the question still remains: What became of the Body? What did the Apostles do with it? A human body is not a thing that one can stow away anywhere. How is it that no one has ever been able to point it out? Had it not risen, the Jews might easily have discovered it, and then have pointed it out, and exclaimed: "He is not risen; He is still here. Look, and examine for yourselves. You are founding your creed upon an imposture," and so forth. But this they were never able to do.

So, again, to pass to another argument. Our Lord actually appeared to His followers and friends for the space of forty days, after He rose from the tomb. And we can account for the entire change that came over

His followers and disciples in no other way except by admitting that He really did move among them and assure them of His actual return to life, by virtue of His own inherent power.

Let us consider the circumstances, and we shall see furthermore that the whole history of the early Christian Church remains wholly inexplicable, unless the Resurrection is accepted. The Apostles and disciples had forsaken home and friends and occupations, to follow Him, whom they believed to be the Messias. They regarded Him as the Promised One, who should free Israel from the Roman yoke and make the "chosen people" the rulers of the world. They were still carnal minded, and had not risen to the conception of a spiritual kingdom, and had no idea of a suffering Redeemer, though Christ had often tried to impress this view upon them. Even when they followed Him to Jerusalem, just before His passion, they still entertained the hope that He would at last declare Himself, and begin manifesting the glories and the triumph of Shiloh. But hope told a flattering tale. Things did not turn out as they expected. They beheld their Master betrayed, condemned, slain, and apparently unable to help Himself. Terrified beyond measure at the violence of the multitude, and at the hatred of the Sanhedrin, they fled away and abandoned their Leader to His fate.

They had looked upon Him as the Messias, yet there He hung, dead and helpless, before their very eyes. They thought that it was He who was to have redeemed Israel; but now they were persuaded that they had been deceived. All was now over. He was not, He could not be the Messias, for the dead cannot lead a nation to victory. But, worst of all, He had died upon the tree of shame, the death of a common slave and malefactor. Why, the curse of Jehovah Himself had fallen upon Him, for is it not written, "Cursed be he that hangs on the tree!"

In short, dejection, disappointment, despair and fear had taken possession of their minds and hearts,

and they were ready to abandon all hope, and sorrowfully deemed their mission at an end.

Yet, wonderful to relate, only a few weeks later their whole attitude is changed! See! these cowards have become utterly fearless; these faithless followers, biding away for the fear of the Jews, now court publicity and openly proclaim the Crucified to be the Master of life and of death, and the Lord of light and glory. They who but yesterday trembled at the sound of their own voices and who feared to acknowledge the Divine Master; yea, even Peter, who denied Him, with curses and oaths, at the challenge of a mere serving maid, now knows no fear. Neither the hostility of the Sanhedrin, nor the loss of friends, nor social ostracism, nor stripes, nor torture, nor death itself, can silence Christ's followers, nor restrain their fervor and their zeal for their Divine Master.

With one voice they assert that He whom the Jews had so cruelly murdered is no other than the Son of God, the promised Messias, the all-powerful Lord of the world.

In a word, some unprecedented thing had taken place. Some stupendous event had happened, which suddenly transformed them, and turned them into different beings. Something had, in a moment, banished all their fears, dissipated all their doubts, enlivened their dropping spirits, stiffened their wills, and inflamed their zeal, and made them other men. Not one, but all were set on fire. Not one, but all boldly and defiantly "preached Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentile foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 23.)

How do we account for this? There is just one explanation, but only one. The simple explanation is that the truth of Christ's divinity had been made clear, certain, unmistakable and evident. They were filled with daring and heroism, and laughed at torture and death, so that some exclaimed mockingly, "These men are full of new wine." (Acts ii. 13.) And why? Because they at last "knew in whom they had believed"

and were certain that (2 Timothy i. 12) He was, what He had declared, *viz.*, the Son of the living God. He had truly risen. He had appeared and conversed with many. He had entered their council chamber, "the doors being locked," and showed them His hands and His side, and even allowed Thomas to put his fingers into the wound of His side and to assure himself of His absolute reality and identity. He presented Himself likewise to the holy women, and to St. Peter, and to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and "then was He seen by more than five hundred brethren at once," so that no doubt was left in the minds of any of the Apostles, but that Christ had indeed conquered death. "O! Grave, where is thy victory? O, death, where is thy sting?"

In due course every one of the Apostles (save Judas, who had sold his Master for gold), sealed their faith with their life's blood, and died glorious deaths. I say this since even St. John is reckoned as a martyr, because he submitted to death, and was actually let down into a cauldron of boiling oil, though he was miraculously preserved.

Now, let me ask: Do men die for a probability? Are they ready to stake their earthly happiness, their fortune, their character and reputation, and even life itself and all that life holds most dear, for the sake of a mere dream? Will they die, and submit to horrible torture, like St. Peter, for instance, who was crucified with his head downward, in testimony of a lie? Perish the thought! A thousand times, no! They endured the worst that human cruelty could devise, simply and solely because they had seen, with their own eyes, their risen Lord, and because they *knew* they were safe in His divine keeping.

But not only the attitude of the Apostles proves to us the great and startling reality of Christ's triumph, but also the whole after-history of His Church. As it is perfectly well known, the Faith soon spread among all people. In the first place, many thousands of Jews submitted to the true Church, and helped to

spread the Gospel in other lands. Even though wealth, and learning, and position, and power were all ranged against them, the poor despised followers of "the Galilean" conquered all along the line. Within an incredible short time the Christian religion extended from one country to another and drew within its fold whole peoples and nations, until at last the Cross (once the sign of disgrace) was found raised on imperial standards and dominating over the palaces of kings.

If such unheard-of results could be effected by an imposture, then an effect may truly exist without any adequate cause. As the great St. Augustine so truly observes: "If the world was converted to Christianity without a miracle, that fact itself would be the greatest miracle of all."

We need not develop the matter further, though much more might be said if time permitted. What has been said is enough and more than enough to excite our faith still further, and to fill our hearts with gratitude to God, who, for our sakes, died and rose again, immortal and impossible. To Him be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

LOW SUNDAY

Faith the Source of Our Strength

Text:—"This is the victory which overcometh the world, our Faith."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

THE world is frequently spoken of in the pages of Holy Writ, and always with words of warning. "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world," says St. John, for "if any man love the world, the Charity of the Father is not in him." (1 John v. 15.) And again: "We know that the whole world is seated in wickedness." (1 John v. 19.) So St. James: "The friendship of this world is the enemy of God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God." (James iv. 4.)

The world is our enemy because it is always seeking to draw us away from our allegiance to God, and to plunge us into sin. "For all that is in the world," writes St. John, "is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but of the world." (1 John ii. 16.) Hence it is continually laying pitfalls for our feet, and setting before us a thousand dangerous occasions of sin.

Now the practical question before us is, how are we to pass unscathed through the midst of all these dangers that surround us? How are we to remain upright, honest, pure, truthful and loyal to God and to His Church, when such powerful and such unscrupulous enemies dog our footsteps at every turn?

The Apostle in to-day's Epistle points out the means. He discloses to us the great secret of success. That secret is to be found in our Faith. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our Faith." (1 John v. 4.)

At first these words may seem somewhat obscure and difficult of interpretation, but a little reflection

will bring out their full meaning, and convince us of their absolute truthfulness.

Let us begin then by calling to mind that the source of all sin, just as the source of all virtue and merit, lies in the will: in the exercise of our free choice. Sin is indeed nothing else than the turning away of the will from God: the fixing of the affections on something forbidden by the law of God. So long as I can maintain my will rivetted and intent upon what is good and lawful, there can be no danger of sin. It is only when the world, or its accomplices, the devil and the flesh, strive to lead my will astray, by subtle sophisms, and honied words, and by promises of temporary delights and pleasures and natural satisfactions, that I run a risk of falling into their snares.

Now, when foolish men and women allow their wills to be led astray by the attractions of sense, and succumb to the wiles of the devil, it is almost always from the want of a thoroughly well grounded faith. They are led away along the paths of error, because they have been deceived, and are not really and fully conscious of the ends to which those paths are taking them. A man is persuaded to indulge some passion, to satisfy some unruly impulse, to commit some gross act of injustice, or of vengeance, because his mind is entirely occupied and taken up with the satisfaction it will give him, and with the unholy joy that it excites, and he practically loses sight of the fearful consequences of his crime. In a word, he is half asleep. His faith is dormant. Could he be thoroughly aroused, could he but be induced carefully to weigh every circumstance, and to balance causes and effects, and to consider seriously what he is about, he would, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, desist from carrying out his purpose, and would pause and rein up, even though it might be on the very brink of destruction. Our Lord Himself, speaking of the most awful crime that has ever been perpetrated, begged for its forgiveness on the express ground of the ignorance of the offenders. "Father," He exclaimed, when inter-

ceding for those who were putting Him to death, "Father, forgive them, for they *know not* what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.) This did not mean that they knew nothing, nor even that they were ignorant to such an extent as to be free from guilt; it meant merely that they did not realize the fulness and extent of their crime. They did not appreciate the infinite perfections and the infinite majesty and dignity of the Divine Victim. They did not know Him to be God. They must have known Him to be innocent and sinless, but they did not reach the height of recognizing in the prostrate human form before them, the eternal and everlasting Son of the Father. Had they known all; had they been fully aware of the real facts, they never could have brought themselves to "crucify unto themselves the Son of God, and to make of Him a mockery." (Heb. vi. 6.) In every case of serious sin, there is a clouding of the intellect and a darkening of the understanding (often wilful and culpable) without which the sin would scarcely have been committed.

Is it not the infallible Spirit of God who declares that impetuosity, thoughtlessness, and a general absence of due consideration is the source of *all* our spiritual misery? "With desolation is the whole world laid desolate, because there is no man who considers in his heart." (Jerm. xii. 11.) On the other hand, does not the same divine authority assure us that sober and earnest reflection would save us from all our serious faults. "Think of thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Ecclus. vii. 40.)

There is no man so low, so depraved, so deeply sunk in vice, but would alter his life and amend could he only be made to realize his sad and appalling state. Were it possible to seize hold of the very worst criminal, and to hold him over the bottomless pit, so that he could actually see and deliberately gaze upon the lurid flames and the excruciating torments produced by those fires which are never extinguished, and which are related to sin, as effect is related to its cause, that criminal would undoubtedly change his evil course,

banish all sin from his heart, and begin to lead the life of a saint.

Now it is so arranged by God's providence that we cannot see either the agonies of hell or the joys of Heaven, neither the delights of the blessed, nor the pain and anguish of the damned. No. Not with our corporeal eyes. But God has mercifully provided us with other eyes, *viz.*, the eyes of faith. And with these, we can see and contemplate at our leisure and consider intellectually all that Faith reveals. Now, if we would overcome temptation, we must keep these eyes open, and they will supply us with all the motives requisite to strengthen our will and to render us victorious in the hour of danger.

What we want, what indeed every man wants in order to render him victorious, is a real, practical, burning Faith. It is not in vain that St. Peter exhorts us to resist "strong in faith," since it is precisely on the greater or lesser liveliness of our faith that victory depends.

This will be readily understood if we compare two men fighting against the same temptation. The man whose faith is dull and weak is easily influenced by evil. The forbidden object throws a spell around him. He becomes absorbed in it, and scarcely thinks of anything else. His whole mind is occupied by the present pleasure, and he scarcely pauses to think of the future consequences of his rash act.

Now, turn away from him and consider a man of strong, energetic faith, and you cannot fail to observe that his whole attitude and bearing is essentially different, for the simple reason that he is fully awake and thoroughly realizes what he is about.

Let us suppose that he is invited to defile his soul by the commission of some loathsome act of sensuality. The attraction is, let us suppose, exceedingly strong. His lower nature yearns after the indulgence, and he is as sensible of the pleasure that is offered to him as anyone can be. He would naturally give way. But his faith comes to the rescue. It reminds him of

his responsibilities and of the consequences of his acts. He pauses. He reasons. He argues: "Yes, that forbidden delight does undoubtedly appeal to my lower nature. It may, if I consent, afford me some passing physical delight. But, O God! at what cost! Which, then, shall it be; one moment of sensual pleasure, followed by an eternity of remorse and torment; or one moment of sacrifice and self-restraint, followed by an eternity of true peace and heavenly delight?" Thus we see that it is his faith that supplies the strong motives which strengthen the will and result in final victory. It is his faith that assures him that it is better to suffer for a moment now, and to rejoice for all eternity hereafter, than to rejoice for a moment now, and to suffer for all eternity hereafter.

Though this consideration is a most powerful one, yet it is by no means the only one. A man of lively faith will summon to his aid a hundred other motives for resistance scarcely less powerful. He will reflect that he cannot indulge his evil appetite without grievously offending God, and then he will call to mind who God is, and all that he owes to Him. "He created me, He gave me not only life, but all that makes life worth living. He has preserved me to this hour, and bestowed upon me health, strength, possessions, talents, friends, acquaintances. Ah! yes. The very sun that shines on me, the air I breathe, the earth on which I tread, all come from Him. The five wonderful senses of my body, and the faculties of my soul; in short, all I have and am are His gifts to me. And now, am I, like some craven cur, going to forget all this? Am I really going to show my gratitude by rebelling against Him, and treading under foot His Precious Blood, for the sake of a vile fleshy satisfaction? Is that to be my return for all His innumerable and unspeakable benefits? Now answer, O my soul! what have I done during all these past years to prove my gratitude? What have I, so far, offered to God in acknowledgment of His infinite generosity? Nothing! The fact is, I have had nothing to offer

Him but what was, by a thousand titles, already His. Now, however, this very temptation is supplying me with something that I can present to Him. Now, I have the opportunity of offering Him the sacrifice of my own will. Yes, I am able to deny myself for His sweet sake, and as a slight proof of my love and gratitude. And shall I throw away so golden an opportunity? No! A thousand times no."

Thus it is clear that a man of vivid faith will pass triumphantly through temptations that will easily prove fatal to others. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our Faith."

Some persons, of course, will be stirred more by one set of motives, and some more by another, but whatever be the motive appealing with more special strength to any individual, its efficacy and power will be in proportion to the vigor and intensity of his faith.

A Catholic who is of a more generous and disinterested nature will be more deeply influenced by his personal love and devotion towards his divine Master than by any considerations of personal loss or gain, of punishment or of reward. And such a one will excite his faith to produce within his heart a sense of the love and tenderness and goodness of God, rather than of His awful judgments.

Thus, if molested by temptations against the angelic virtue, his faith will at once call before him the passion and death of Jesus Christ. He will, if we may so express ourselves, place the sensual delight, the unclean pleasure, or the sordid gain on one side of the balance, and, on the other, he will place the Cross of Christ. Before consenting to defile himself with grievous sin, his faith will urge him to look with the eyes of his soul on to the lurid, dark and cloud-swept heights of Calvary. There he will take his stand, in imagination, among the blaspheming Jews and cruel executioners, and will thoughtfully and silently contemplate the sacred Body of Jesus stretched in agony upon the Cross. He will sorrowfully watch the Precious Blood gushing forth from a thousand ghastly

wounds; from the deep gashes left by the cruel scourges; from the lacerations on His sacred Head, made by the innumerable punctures of the thorny crown; and more especially from the pierced hands and feet and side. He will see His life's Blood trickling down, and hear it splash, drop by drop, on the hard rock beneath. Then he will lift the eyes of his soul to gaze full into that tearful, disfigured, blood-stained Face, and there he will read, as in a book, the full force and meaning of those words: "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friend." (John xv. 13.) Then, if he be not altogether beyond the reach of sentiments of human sympathy and gratitude, the poor, tried man will turn towards the temptation with unspeakable loathing and disgust; not to yield to it, but to wonder how it could ever, even for a moment, have proved an attraction to him. Then, as the boundless love of Jesus Christ and His awful passion and death impress themselves more vividly on his heart and conscience, he will throw himself upon his knees, and full of sentiments of thankfulness, and compassion, and love, he will open out his soul to the best and greatest of Fathers and Benefactors, and protest his readiness to endure any and every calamity rather than offend the tenderest of hearts, and crucify again unto himself the Lord of Glory, by the commission of sin.

The efficacy of such thoughts depends, of course, upon the sincerity and the vitality of one's faith. One, who does not believe that God died in agony for his redemption, or (what comes very much to the same thing) one who never recalls the fact, nor adverts to it, nor familiarizes himself with it, will have no power to beat down the tempter, or to dash from his lips the cup of sweetened poison which the devil is offering him.

Another powerful source of strength which faith supplies is the consciousness of God's actual presence, and the lavishness with which He is ready to reward every act of self-renunciation performed for His sake

and in His name. Though, at the first onset of temptation I may feel inclined to play the coward and to follow the path of least resistance, yet a lively faith will speedily enable me to recover myself. For I will call to mind that I am not fighting alone, but am one of a vast army, under the sublime leadership of Jesus Christ Himself. I am, by position and training, not a weak, faltering worldling, but a warrior—yes, a warrior, who has solemnly sworn, in holy Baptism, to wage a ceaseless war against the enemies of Christ who, at the same time, are likewise my enemies. My General is no other than God incarnate. And what is more, I am fighting in His dread presence, and under His very eyes. Yea! at this very moment, while I am actually faltering and hesitating, He is looking down upon me and reading me through and through. He sees my difficulties and my struggles, and He longs to see me vanquishing them. He yearns to see me strike a blow in defence of virtue, truth, justice and loyalty, for He wishes to reward me as He alone knows how, and to place a crown of imperishable glory on my head, and this is impossible till I have proved my worth and "won my spurs" by a victory over my passions. Then, courage, O my soul! Behold, the issues of the battle are in my own hands. I am the arbiter of my faith. I know, for here again my faith informs me, that not all the devils in hell can injure so much as a hair of my head, or inflict upon me the slightest injury until, of my own free will, I fling open the gates of the citadel of my heart and basely let them in. Yes, thank God! Victory, Victory is mine, certainly and assuredly mine, if I have but the will to gain it. For God has pledged His word that He will never allow me to be tempted beyond my strength, but, in every case, will so make issue that I may be able to bear it.

Who, my brethren, with such cheering thoughts filling his soul, would be such a miserable poltroon and dastardly coward as to consent to sin, and to hand himself over body and soul into the hands of

the enemy? Who, on the contrary, would not feel every fibre of his being burning with a holy eagerness to crush the oppressor, to trample passion under foot, and to proclaim to all the world, by word and deed, the sovereignty of God? No one possessing any spirit, with the eye of the divine Master resting on him, with certain victory within reach, and with the knowledge that endless rewards are awaiting him above, would show the white feather, and betray the cause of loyalty and truth.

Much more might be added, but enough has been said to vindicate the truth of St. John's inspired words, that the source of victory over the world, and over all the seductions and deceits of the world, is to be found in the sturdy quality and the vivid brightness of our faith.

Be men of strong and lively faith, then, and all will go well with you. For a man of faith is one to whom the invisible world lies ever open and present before him. He is one to whom Heaven and hell are greater realities than the very earth on which he stands, and to whom God and His Blessed Mother and the angels and saints are more truly present than the multitudes whose passing footsteps and ringing voices break upon his physical ears.

While worldly-minded and lukewarm Catholics fall again and again into sin, on the very first breath of temptation, and will offend God grievously for sake of even the slightest gratification, those who are accustomed to live habitually in the presence of God, and who exercise their faith in the manner described above, will conquer the severest temptations and stand undaunted and invulnerable in the midst of the fiercest attacks of their hellish foes. To such be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Good Shepherd

Text:—"The good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

AMONG the many commands imposed upon us by divine authority, the greatest is the command to "love the Lord our God with our whole heart and soul." This one duty is indeed of the highest importance, because if properly understood it will be found to include and to embrace every other. Hence St. Augustine says: "Love God, and then do whatever you will." A wise and accurate saying, for evidently he who loved God must desire to do the will of God, and will never wilfully act in a manner to offend Him. Hence the inspired writer teaches that "Love is the fulfilment of the law." For the fulfilment of the law is the very proof and test of genuine love, as Jesus Christ clearly implies when He says: "If any man love Me, he will keep my Word."

But to love God is not merely the chief and primary duty of every rational creature, it is also the easiest and the most natural, so soon as we begin to realize the nature and the character of God. Who, indeed, should find any difficulty in loving the infinitely Beautiful, the infinitely Good, and the infinitely Wise? Is it not the very nature of goodness to attract? Does not beauty of character, and sweetness and gentleness and generosity of disposition even among men win our hearts and excite affection by reason of their own intrinsic loveliness? Yet these qualities, as we see them in the world around us, are but the dim and unstable reflections of God's unapproachable perfections. If, therefore, it be easy and natural to love the mere reflection, it ought to be immeasurably easier

still to love such qualities in their very source and fulness.

And this would really be the case, were it possible for us to come in direct contact with them; adequately to realize them, and to measure their length, and breadth, and height, and depth. But alas! God is hidden from us now, and His divine attributes are seen only dimly, and with the eyes of faith.

But what was before obscure and difficult to comprehend has been made comparatively clear and luminous by the Incarnation. The infinitely Wise not only understood but sympathized with us in our difficulties, and was determined to exhibit His attributes in such a manner that we could more easily grasp them, and to exercise them in a way which would appeal more directly to our nature. It is true that from the very beginning, He was careful to assure us of His love. Again and again by the mouth of His sages and His prophets He declared that He loved us even more dearly than a mother loves the child of her womb. But He did not rest satisfied with mere assurances. In the appointed time, from words He passed to deeds. So that we contemplate Him not only coming down upon earth, and walking among men, as He walked of yore with Adam, amid the entrancing beauties of the Garden of Paradise, but what is immeasurably more admirable, we contemplate Him, assuming our nature, and becoming man, thereby identifying Himself with our race, and becoming (as the inspired writer says) "like to us in all things excepting sin."

If God's walking with Adam was a clear manifestation of affection and condescension, how infinitely stronger a manifestation is afforded by His "taking flesh and *dwelling* permanently amongst us," and becoming verily "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh."

His relations to us are indeed so close and intimate, and yet so varied, that He has to assume not one, but many titles, in order to express them. He is "our

Father," our "elder Brother," our "Lord and Master," our "Model and Example," our "Saviour," our "King," our "Life" and our "Salvation." In to-day's Gospel He speaks of Himself as "the Good Shepherd." Now, the beauty and full significance of this last title is scarcely perceived or understood by us as it was by those who were actually gathered around Him to hear Him speak. Indeed, the duties and functions of a shepherd in the age and in the country in which our Lord lived, would have made it very clear to the Jews to whom He addressed Himself. It was not only an honorable calling, in which even the noblest in the land would engage, but its duties were arduous and important, and often not unaccompanied with danger. The shepherd practically lived with his sheep and watched over them by night, as well as by day, with the greatest solicitude. So great was their confidence in him, that instead of driving them before him, the shepherd would walk first and they would troop after, as he led them on to new pastures and shady downs, where they might pluck the up-growing grass. Moreover, he had to defend them from prowling wolves, and from the attacks of other more ferocious beasts, such as bears and lions, and might often be called upon to expose himself to the danger of losing life or limb. Thus, to take a single instance, David, who afterwards became king, "kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, who took a ram out of the midst of the flock. And David pursued after them and struck them, and delivered the ram out of their mouths; and then they rose up against David himself, and might have torn him to pieces, but he caught them by the throat, and he strangled and killed them, and so delivered the flock from their cruelty." (See 1 Kings xvii. 34-35.)

Sometimes these shepherds would shirk their duty, especially if they were not the owners of the flock, but mere hirelings, paid to perform a difficult task, "whose own the sheep are not." Sometimes they would fly before the approaching danger, and save themselves by

abandoning their charge, and leaving them unprotected to the mercy of tiger, or lion, or hungry bear.

Now, Jesus Christ, who loved to draw His figures and examples from common objects and familiar scenes, explains his position towards His own chosen followers by referring to Himself as "the Good Shepherd," who knows his sheep, and who is known by them, leading them to the rich pastures of sound and true doctrine, and feeding them with His own precious Body and Blood. But this is not all. Besides feeding them, and protecting them, and watching over them with the utmost care, he tells us that the good shepherd even "lays down His life for His sheep." The hireling flies because he is a hireling; but "the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." Now, there are many good shepherds, but the good Shepherd *par excellence* is no other than Jesus Christ Himself, whose love of us is so great that it stops at nothing. "Greater love than this no man hath," says our divine Lord, "that a man lay down his life for his friends." (St. John xv. 13.) Truly, no mere man has ever exhibited greater love but the love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is God as well as man, rose up and overflowed this high-water mark by an immeasurable degree, for He gave His life, not indeed for His friends, but for His bitterest enemies and most inhuman and cruel executioners. "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep." (St. John x. 11.)

It is difficult for us to enter into the Sacred Heart of our Lord and to understand the burning love for men that filled it *from the very first moment* of the Incarnation, for we have not the foreknowledge and the marvellous prescience that He enjoyed. God's admirable and compassionate Providence has arranged that *we* should *not* see the various trials and tribulations that are to come upon us as life wears on. We live in happy unconsciousness of the future, and cannot so much as suspect the crosses and contradictions that lie further along the path we have to traverse, so that we are able, without difficulty, to

laugh and make merry with our friends, and to enjoy the passing hour without let or hindrance. But Jesus Christ would not allow Himself even that consolation. The thought of His bitter passion, with every detail of cruelty, humiliation, and indignity that was to accompany it, was ever before Him. He possessed a perfect and accurate foreknowledge of the baseless accusations, and the perjured witnesses, and from the first saw clearly with the eyes of His soul, the scourges that would tear His sacred Flesh, the purple garment that would be thrown over Him in derision, as well as the crown of thorns that were to pierce His sacred Head, and the nails that would be driven through His delicate and sensitive Hands and Feet. Yet He never showed the least resentment, nor hesitated in the perfection of His acceptance, but remained patient and meek as a lamb in the hands of the slaughterers. In the bright hours of the day, and in the silent watches of the night, the thought was always before Him, yet so intense was the love of this divine Shepherd that so far from wishing to defer the hour of His agony and death, He rather longed and yearned for its approach. It was to this that He referred, when He said: "I have a baptism with which I am to be baptized, and *how am I straitened* until it be accomplished" (St. Luke xii. 50), speaking as though His heart were heavy with grief, until He could actually deliver Himself up a living holocaust for His poor erring children, and free them from the oppressive and unbearable tyranny of the devil.

Consider another striking difference between Jesus Christ and other good and holy shepherds of the Catholic Church. Though thousands of zealous pastors and martyrs have died cruel deaths in witness to the ttruh, yet no martyr ever died as Jesus Christ did. Not only were they spared all foreknowledge of the torments to which they were ultimately to be exposed, but when the hour of their supreme sacrifice arrived, they had no choice but apostasy or death. The inhuman judge might offer them their freedom, but only on condi-

tion that they sacrificed to the idols, or performed some other act equally abhorrent to a true disciple. Consequently, to avoid grievous sin, they were under an absolute and strict obligation to endure the penalty. There was no other means of escape. But Jesus Christ was a free agent, and no one had any power to coerce Him in any way whatsoever, so that just as He availed Himself of His supreme power to withdraw Himself from the multitude, when they would forcibly make Him king (St. John vi. 15), so He might, with like ease, have escaped from their hands when they seized Him to lead Him to execution. "I lay down My life of Myself," He clearly tells us in the tenth chapter of St. John's Gospel and "I take it up again."

Just as He, who might have been born on a warm day of summer, chose to be born on a cold night of winter, and as He, who might have been laid in a sumptuous palace, preferred to be laid in a manger, and just as He, who might have been the son of a rich and powerful queen, chose to be the son of a lowly virgin of an obscure village; so He, who might have lived in splendor and have triumphed over all by His wisdom and power and influence, chose to hide His divine gifts and qualities, and to act as one unable to help Himself, and to submit to all those special indignities and humiliations, such as the crowning with thorns, and the companionship of criminals, and the dereliction on the Cross even though they formed no necessary part of an ordinary Roman execution.

Further, "on coming into the world, He saith: 'A body thou hast fiteth to me.'" (Heb. x. 5.) Yes, my brethren, a body the most perfect and the most highly strung, and consequently the most acutely sensitive to pain and anguish, was the body "fitted to Him" by the Holy Spirit of God, in the Virgin Mary's womb, in which to accomplish the work of our redemption.

Let us try and enter into the heart and mind of our divine Master, as He enters upon the supreme hour of His agony. He, the awe-inspiring Judge of the liv-

ing and of the dead, is Himself bound in thongs and arrayed before an earthly judge. He who is not only sinless and incapable of the least imperfection, but who is the very fountain and source of all sanctity, is Himself accused of the worst crimes, and formally and solemnly declared guilty. This guilt, which is in reality our guilt, is laid upon Him, and He not only accepts the crushing burden, but willingly and even impatiently presses forward to bear the penalties of that guilt, which are:—to be fixed, while yet in the full vigor of early manhood, to a cross by means of rough iron nails, driven by repeated blows of the hammer right through hands and feet, and to be there exposed naked to the gaze of the scoffing multitude, in an agony of pain, until at least death puts a term to His sufferings, and His adorable body is taken down and laid in the tomb.

God has done many and admirable things, to prove His love for us, and to excite us to love Him in return. But it would be impossible to point to any act of God which speaks to us so eloquently, and so forcibly, and so personally of His love as the act by which He decreed to die for us.

We are, by nature, sceptical and suspicious. We find it hard to accept the most earnest assurances of affection. And we seldom rest satisfied with words, unless more tangible proofs are also forthcoming. It is easy to break forth into fine speeches, and to soothe the attentive ear with fair promises, but we seek far more certain evidence than that. And, like the true Lover of our souls, Jesus, rather than lose our friendship or afford us any excuse for doubting Him, accedes to our most unreasonable demands, and adds to all His other proofs, the proof of personal service. To love when love involves no pain; to love when all is according to our desires, and when nothing thwarts us, is comparatively an easy matter; but the true test of love is sacrifice. And the greater the sacrifice is, and the more personal, the greater is the love that it manifests.

If we apply this principle to Jesus Christ, we shall find that His love was greater than that of any other, surpassing, in fact, all experience and all limit. "He loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Galatians ii. 20), cried out the heroic St. Paul, in an ecstasy of fervor. And what he said, under the influence of inspiration, we can each say most truthfully and most accurately for ourselves. For He died for each as for all; and for all as for each.

Let us try and reconstruct the scene. Let us turn back, in spirit, the hands of the great clock of Time, some nineteen hundred years. We are in the favored land of Palestine. Below us lies the beautiful city of Jerusalem, with its halls and courts, and doomed temples, its streets, and squares, and many stately buildings, with tall poplars and leafy palms casting their shade at frequent intervals.

It is early in the afternoon, but there is little sound of movement within the city walls. The immense concourse of people, the idlers and the rabble, as well as the more respectable inhabitants, are silent and still, as though cowed by a universal fear. Though it is day, the sun has miraculously withdrawn its light and a heavy opaque shadow rests upon all things. At a little distance rises the hill of Calvary, where evil men and notorious criminals are slowly done to death, in expiation of their offenses against the State, and with much publicity, in order to strike terror into all beholders.

Looking steadily through the gloom, we can just descry the dim uncertain outline of three great crosses cutting the sky-line. On each there glimmers through the darkness the white bloodless form of a human body, writhing in the agonies of death.

As we draw nearer, we catch the sound of many voices, filling the air like the murmur of some distant sea. A few steps nearer, and we can just make out a surging crowd of men and women and children, gathered together beneath the central cross. There are priests, and Pharisees, and doctors of the law, and

centurions, and city magnates, each in his distinctive dress, and a host of soldiers with their spears, and swords, and bright shining helmets. Though somewhat appalled by the unusual phenomena, for the stars are visible though it is almost noonday, and the earth trembles and sways like a drunken man, and the rocks split with a deafening roar, and the tombs open and the dead arise and appear unto many, yet we still note a bitterness and an hostility among the crowd, which even death itself seems incapable of pacifying. Jeers, and oaths, and words of cruel mockery are on men's lips, while some look upon the divine Victim and curse the very God of their salvation. "He saved others," cries out one more heartless than the rest, "Himself He cannot save." (Matt. xxvii. 42.) "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross!" (Matt. xxvii. 40.) But, heedless of these cruel words, we press through the crowds, in spirit, and take up our stand beneath the Cross of Christ. Oh! How hard and rough is the bed on which our Incarnate God has chosen to die. See, his arms are stretched out wide, as though to embrace the whole world, while from His hands and feet gush forth streams of His precious Blood, to wash away the sins of all mankind. His adorable head is crowned with sharp penetrating thorns that pierce His flesh, for He is indeed our King, though our sins have woven Him a crown of dishonor in place of a crown of honor. Gaze in reverence and gratitude upon that mangled form. See how the scourges have left their mark, and plowed deep furrows in His quivering flesh. Look upon His sacred countenance, and see the spittle which the brutal soldiers have vomited there. The Face, upon which angels love to gaze and whose presence constitutes the very joy of Heaven, is now all disfigured. His eyes are choked up with the crimson streams that the thorny crown have let loose, and the tears flow in silent testimony of His deep sorrow and grief. See the coarse iron nails! See how they have been driven through the tender sensitive flesh, tearing

and lacerating muscle, and vein, and tendon, and nerve in their passage, and fixing the adorable hands and feet to the hard wood. Look up into the face of the crucified, see there an expression of great agony and of sorrow, indeed, but also an expression of measureless compassion and of infinite love. Oh! what tenderness beams from these eyes, so soon to be closed in death; what affection is expressed in every feature! Each bleeding sore, each gaping wound seems to reveal the immensity of His love, and to provoke our wonder and our pity. We almost seem to hear Him crying: "Oh, all ye that pass by the way attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow." (Lam. i. 12.)

And as we gaze at the mangled, bleeding, agonizing form, and note the intensity of the pain, the cold, the nakedness, the humiliation, the abandonment and helplessness that are so apparent, our faith tells us that He whom we contemplate is verily God! Yes! God, the uncreated, and the eternal, and the infinite. But, you will say, we are accustomed to picture God to ourselves as seated on a great throne, and surrounded by a vast army of blessed spirits, ready to do His will. We think of Him as mighty and terrible, dwelling in light inaccessible, and ruling over all with irresistible power. Yes! Truly then, how comes He to be reduced to such an extremity? The answer is that, though there be but one divine Person in God the Son, there are two distant natures. In His divine nature suffering and anguish are impossible, so He assumed our nature, and engrafted Himself as a branch into the poisoned tree of our humanity, so that He might sweeten, and purify, and sanctify every member who makes no opposition, and restore all to spiritual life; for as by *one* man all fell into sin, so by *one* man *all* received the power of spiritual regeneration, "to as many as received Him, He gave power to be made the sons of God." (John i. 12.)

Hence it is undoubtedly correct to state that God suffered, that God was crucified, and that God died,

for it was in very truth a divine Person, who endured the ignominy of the Cross, even though it was in an assumed and finite nature, since the divine nature is not susceptible of pain.

Here, then, we take our stand with St. John and the Blessed Virgin Mother, and here we learn more and more fully the full significance of our text, *viz.*, "The good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep." We must resolve to make the Cross of Christ our constant companion, our *vade mecum;* yea, it should be to us an exhaustless book, in which we may read on forever, of a love which knows no bounds and which puts to shame all human love, and wherein we may ponder over and over again the measureless depths of pity, and mercy, and compassion to be found welling up from the sacred Heart, as from a copious and overflowing fountain.

Surely, if there be any sense of gratitude in our composition, if there be any feelings of affection, and devotion, and zeal left within our soul, the contemplation of Jesus, our Love, crucified and dying for us, will arouse them, and infuse into them fresh vigor and strength. We shall take up the burden of life with renewed firmness and resolution in spite of its difficulties, and shall be ashamed to be soft, delicate and fastidious members of a thorn-crowned Head; and will resolve to suffer with Christ here that we may reign with Him hereafter; and will not refuse to wear His livery of pain, and trial, and sorrow upon earth, knowing that it is such who will approach nearest to Him, and share more abundantly in all His joys in Heaven.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

(First Sunday in May)

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

Text:—"Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?"—(*Cant. vi.* 9.)

ON this, the first Sunday of May, our thoughts are naturally drawn toward the ever glorious and immaculate Virgin Mother of God. In every land and in every clime this month is known to Catholics as "The Month of Mary," or "Our Lady's Month." Her sweet name is uttered by thousands of preachers; her praises are sung by millions of her loving children, and her memory this day stirs the hearts of every member of the Church throughout the world.

And is it not right and just, dear brethren, that we should thus publicly proclaim our esteem and reverence for one, at once so truly great and glorious in herself, and yet so intimately related to each and every one of us? The world is wont to honor its heroes of a day, to commemorate their achievements, and to keep their memory fresh and green. It raises costly monuments to their honor, places their images in conspicuous positions, and glories in their well-earned fame. And we, dear brethren, who are, as St. Paul reminds us, "fellow citizens with the saints" (Eph. ii. 19), ought surely to be ready to do as much, and, indeed, immeasurably more for the heroes and the great ones of the Church—for those whom the Church has declared "blessed" and whom she has raised upon her very altars for our veneration. Their glory shall never, never fade. Time can not tarnish it. Calumny can not reach it. It is as enduring as God Himself, for it is not dependent upon the fickle and often false judgment of men. Now among these, but immeasurably the greatest and the highest and

the saintliest, is the incomparable queen of the heavenly host, "Mary Most Holy."

Why, it may be asked, do we honor her? What forms the basis and foundation of our profound esteem? Our esteem rests upon no mere fancy, but springs up from the very heart of the Christian faith.

We love Mary, yes, more than words can say, and honor her and revere her, because we are the followers of Christ, our divine Master. We have learned this lesson from no other than from Him, whose very wish, to us, is law. He is our Example, our Model, our Teacher. "Learn of me." "I am the way."

What was Christ's attitude toward her? It was an attitude of the most unheard of and the most marvelous tenderness, respect, and love, such indeed as could be rendered only by the most perfect of sons to the most admirable of mothers. Nay, more; He showed her not love only, but even submission and obedience. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (Luke ii. 51), *i. e.*, to Mary and Joseph. Who shall ever realize all the honor that is involved in the fact that for thirty years, out of a brief thirty-three, Jesus lived with Mary, conversèd with her, honored her, and abided by her rulings?

Even during His public life, His relations with her were ever marked by the most generous and tender love. At the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, when the wine ran short, our blessed Lady did but represent how things stood, and our Lord at once acted upon her mere suggestion. And did so (a) without any pressing or insistence, and (b) even though "his hour had not yet come," and (c) notwithstanding that a great miracle was needed to enable Him to grant her prayer.

Some recall the expression employed by our Saviour: "Woman, what is it to me and to thee?" as a proof that Christ—forgive me even for repeating such an idea—was rude to her, or vexed, or at all events that He wished to signalize that He was little affected

by her petition. Such a conclusion is wholly false. It has no warrant in Scripture, and arises from pure ignorance urged on by malice. Suffer me to explain. Jesus Christ employed not the English tongue, which then had no existence. He did not speak even Greek, but expressed Himself in Aramaic. However, St. John, who records the event, inspired by the Holy Ghost, translates our Lord's words into Greek, in which form they have come down to us. So our nearest approach to the actual expression as it it issued from our Lord's lips must be found in that language. Now the Greek word γύναι which has been rendered "woman," carries with it nothing of the slur or the reproach which is connected with its English equivalent. In such a connection it is not necessary to summon Catholic witnesses, who may be thought biased. Any learned man, if he be but fair-minded, will testify to the fact. Let me then quote such an unimpeachable authority as that of the Protestant Richard Whately, Anglican Archbishop of Dublin. Referring to the marriage feast he observes: The Blessed Virgin "applied to Christ when the wine was deficient. His answer has not that roughness indeed which our English translation gives it, from the use of the term 'woman.' The word in the original is one which denotes no disrespect, being found in the classical Greek writers applied even to a queen." (Sermons on Various Subjects. Sermon ix., p. 226.)

Thus it is clearly seen that the argument which our adversary has founded upon that classical passage falls to the ground. Though we should rightly think an American or an English son guilty of gross rudeness and impropriety were he to address his mother in such words, we have no grounds whatever for passing a similar judgment upon a Hebrew or a Greek. The idioms and character of their languages differ so entirely from our own, that the words employed by us to suggest dishonor and disrespect are employed by them without the least suspicion of either. The word γύναι applied by Christ to the

Queen of Heaven, is employed by classical Greek writers when addressing earthly queens, so that let us, once and for ever, crush out this foolish and groundless objection urged by ignorant Protestants against the practice of honoring the Blessed Virgin, founded upon a mistaken estimate of the value of the word.

Since Christ is our Model, it is our bounden duty to try and imitate Him in all things, and if in all things, then most certainly in the love and consideration and filial obedience He invariably showed His immaculate mother.

A second motive for loving her is precisely on account of the relationship in which she stands to Him. He is indeed God, Creator, Father, Redeemer, and Benefactor. We owe Him every homage and the worship and adoration of our whole hearts. No fibre of our being but should reverberate with love of Him, no faculty or power of our soul but should utter His praises and extol and acknowledge His divine nature and perfections. But how can we so love Him, and yet not love her? How can we feel our hearts burn at the utterance of His name, and yet remain cold and unmoved when we pronounce hers? Can we ever separate in thought Jesus from Mary? Dare we sever those whom God has so closely welded? Can we ever allow ourselves to forget, that if He is Son, she is mother; if He is Child, she is parent; if He is the greatest of all beings, she is the greatest of all creatures: "Blessed among women," and the chosen sanctuary of the uncreated and the eternal? Who was ever so closely related to the Infinite? Which of the angels or of the archangels can exclaim as she can: "Thou art my beloved son, this day—*i. e.*, in the day of time—have I begotten thee, according to thy human nature, as the Father has begotten thee throughout eternity according to thy divine nature"?

Oh! Is it a small thing to give birth to the Son of God, that Protestants should make so little of it? Is it a matter of little consequence that God should have

selected her from among all mankind to bear Him in the womb, to suckle Him at the breasts, and to press Him lovingly to the bosom, and to watch with unremitting care over his infant form? Shall we not rather ask: Who shall measure her dignity, or calculate the heights of her honor, or sound the depths of her privilege? What is the honor that we can show her as compared with this? Protestants wonder at our treating Mary as we do; they deem our reverence excessive, exaggerated, and altogether too unrestrained. But what is the honor and praise that man can show her compared with the honors and distinctions and exalted prerogatives heaped upon her by God? Just nothing at all!

O sweetest Mother! O Virgin undefiled! We poor sinners can never love thee in the measure in which He loved thee who deigned to be thy Son. Our fear, our anxiety, is not lest we should love thee too much, but lest we should not love thee half enough.

Love her, my brethren. Love her, first, because Christ our Example loved her. Love her, secondly, because of *who* she is; *i. e.*, the mother of the Incarnate; and love her, thirdly, because of *what* she is; *viz.*, the fairest and purest of creatures, and "our tainted nature's solitary boast," as the poet sings. Yes. The third motive we have for honoring Mary is that she is the most exalted of our race and represents the very summit and high-water mark of created excellence and perfection.

This statement expresses the constant teaching of the Infallible Church with which the Spirit of Truth remains forever. Fathers, and theologians, popes and doctors, have not merely accepted this dogma with every expression of joy and approval, but have vied with one another in their efforts to show that such was due to her and most fitting in view of the position which she was destined from all eternity to occupy as the mother of the Word made flesh.

Jesus Christ was not as other sons, who are incapable of selecting their own mothers. The ordinary

child, about to be born, has no voice in the matter But Christ was God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. It rested with Him, therefore, and wholly and solely with Him, to choose among all women the most worthy and the most fitting for the purpose. His choice lay among all the members of the human race, future as well as present, and merely possible as well as actual. The honor he was about to confer was unique, unparalleled, sublime, and in a sense, infinite. On whom would he confer it? Would He choose for his mother a sinner, when He might as easily have a saint? Would He choose a slave, when He might have a queen? Would He choose one stained and tarnished when He might have one pure and immaculate? Impossible! Christ, who has solemnly commanded us to honor our parents, would assuredly have shown us the example. Yea; He would surpass all earthly sons in the fulfilling of this commandment—as in the fulfilling of the rest. Yet even amongst ourselves what affection and honor we love to show to the parent who gives us birth! How we cherish the mother who has watched over us in our years of helplessness, who has suffered for us, and who has thought of us more than she has thought of herself. Is there anything that a dutiful son would not do for his mother? Is there any grace or favor, any gift of body or of spirit, that he would not confer on her, were he able? Is there any honor he would think excessive, could he bestow it by a word, or by a mere act of the will? Emphatically not. Then are we to believe that Jesus Christ, the model Son, would feel less lovingly toward His own mother? Perish the thought! His love was commensurate with His power, and in the exercise of both, He clothed her with a spiritual grace and beauty and splendor and perfection which outrivals that of the highest of the angels. However stupendous and superbly magnificent may be the blessed spirits that stand before the throne of the Majesty of Heaven, it would be clearly incongruous and unseemly that the mother of their King should in any sense be inferior

to the ordinary courtiers of the supernal palace. To be only their equal would be too low, considering her relationship to Him. She, as the "God-bearer," is entitled to a preeminence and an exaltation as unique and as unapproachable as is the office she fills.

Justly then do we honor her, not only (1) because we must emulate the example of Jesus Christ; not only (2) because of her relationship to God; but (3) also by reason of her exalted virtue and incomparable perfection, which render her deserving of honor for her own sake.

To these reasons we must add yet another, and that is her relation to ourselves. Not only is she a member of our own family, and like us, a child of Adam, and the most beautiful and favored of all our race, but she is our mother—as truly our mother in the spiritual order as our earthly mother is in the natural order. This is no poetic dream, but a stern fact, as true, as it is consoling. For what constitutes "the mother" in the natural order? It is the giving of natural life and existence; not, indeed, as the absolute giver, since God alone is the absolute author even of our natural being, but the instrumental giver. So is it in the spiritual order. Our life is Jesus Christ. Our supernatural life, and the absolute source of all our grace and spiritual being is God-made man. And it is through Mary and by Mary that the God-made man has chosen to come to us and to give us Himself. You may say, but Mary is but the instrument, God is the real giver. Quite true; but precisely the same may be said in the natural order regarding our earthly mother; yet that in no way affects the genuineness of her maternity. Do we think that no honor is due to our earthly mother because she is merely the instrumental cause of our life? Do you refuse to offer any gratitude and affection to her because, forsooth, not she, but God, and He alone, is the supreme and absolute Author of your being? Do you taunt her with the fact that of herself she could never, by any possibility, have given you birth at all? That but for

God's cooperation and watchful care and providence and creative power and but for His established biological laws, human generation would be an impossibility. No; though you fully recognize God as your only Creator, yet you turn with loving eyes, and hearts all overflowing with gratitude to her by whom and through whom God has conferred upon you life and motion and human sensibility.

Similarly, we know and confess that in the spiritual order likewise God is alone the supreme Author of our spiritual life, and that no grace exists that can not be traced ultimately to Him. Yet, since He confers these spiritual favors through Mary, we must turn to her also, and thank and praise her as the instrument that God has selected, and as the channel through which He has bestowed upon us our spiritual life. She is our mother, in the fullest sense of the word, and as though to accentuate and emphasize the fact yet more strongly, and to burn it deep and ineffaceably in our hearts for all time, He deigned not merely to declare it, but to choose the most solemn and sublime moment in which to do so. From the Cross, as he lay in agony, and shedding the last drop of His sacred blood for us poor, unworthy sinners, he spoke of her to St. John, and in the person of St. John to all of us, and said, "Behold thy mother."

These words are pregnant with meaning. They are the words of God, and like all God's words they produce their expressed effect. Mary then is your mother. God wished it to be so. All thanks be to Him for this precious gift, the gift of a mother and a mother's love. Yes, great should be our gratitude for the love which prompted so rich and so generous a favor. Honor then all your life, and especially during this month, Mary the Queen of Heaven. Honor her with all the loyal, pure, tender affection of a child's heart—it is her due and Christ expects this from you. Remember that in honoring her you are paying court to the most powerful advocate that a sinful client can have to plead his cause before the tribunal of the all search-

ing and all just Judge. Remember that in honoring her you are but honoring the mother of all the faithful, and in *particular* your own spiritual mother, who bore you at the foot of the Cross, and the mother of your Saviour who died for you on that Cross. You are but honoring her who is your life, your sweetness, and your hope; whose maternal eyes will watch you as you wander along the paths of life; whose maternal heart will rejoice with you in happiness, and will sorrow with you in sadness; whose hand will ever lead you away from the precipice of sin and ruin, and who will ever be anxious and concerned about you, till the dawn of that never-ending day upon which she will present you, her client and her child, to her divine Son for judgment, and receive you back crowned with the crown of salvation and destined tenderly to breathe forth the praises of both Son and mother for ever and ever.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Seven Sacraments

Text:—"Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration."—(*James, i.* 17.)

MAN was created in a state of innocence, but, listening to the tempter, sinned and fell away from God. By reason of his sin he forfeited his high destiny, and could no longer claim any right to the glorious inheritance that God had lovingly prepared for him.

Seeing, however, the utter misery to which he had been reduced by his rebellion and disobedience, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, with infinite condescension, resolved to redeem him from the slavery of the devil, and to pay the price of his ransom. Hence God became man, and in His human nature suffered and died, and by the shedding of His sacred blood offered to His heavenly Father a price of infinite value, a price sufficient to atone for the sins and crimes, not of the entire world alone, but of an infinite number of worlds, had there been an infinite number of worlds to redeem. His merits were such as to secure for us poor fallen creatures, not merely forgiveness, but strength to rise again from the slough of sin, and the grace to persevere and to sin no more. If we need light to see the path of perfection, and courage to tread that path faithfully and courageously to the end of our days, we know, with the certainty of divine faith, that these needs are abundantly supplied by the merits acquired for us by Jesus Christ. These merits form, as it were, an exhaustless ocean, from which every human being may draw, without ever draining it or drying it up.

But how, we may ask, are the infinite merits of the

Man-God to be applied to our individual souls? That is the question; for it is one thing to possess the healing salve; it is another to know how to apply it to our wounds. It is one thing to possess a potent remedy, but it is quite another thing to administer it so that it may produce the desired effects. In the Passion of Christ we possess an unfailing source of all grace, so that the only question we have now to ask ourselves is, How are we to avail ourselves of such a source, and to draw the "waters of eternal life from the Saviour's fountains." (Is. xii. 3.)

The chief means are the seven Sacraments, which Christ Himself has instituted, and to teach of which He has, by His divine power, annexed an altogether special virtue. They are Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist. Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony. As the famous seven-branched candlestick, with its seven lamps, shed a brightness and a glory throughout the magnificent temple of Solomon, in the old dispensation, so these seven Sacraments shed a spiritual brightness and beauty throughout the still more magnificent temple of the Church in the new.

Since God is the author of nature as well as of grace, it will not surprise us to note a certain parallel running through these two orders. Thus the seven Sacraments correspond to the seven chief needs of life.

I. In the first place man must be born into this world. But he needs a spiritual, no less than a natural, birth. This is accomplished in the Sacrament of Baptism, by means of which he is born into the Church, and becomes in very truth a child of God.

II. But an infant is a poor weak creature, and must grow and acquire strength, or it will never be fit for the stress and battle of life, nor able to hold its own in the midst of a cold and opposing world. And a similar weakness is felt by the newly born Christian in the spiritual order. Hence the Sacrament of Confirmation has been instituted to strengthen and fortify the soul, and to raise it, as it were, from the weak-

ness of childhood to the full vigor and strength of manhood. One can be born but once, and one can reach man's estate but once, hence Baptism and Confirmation, which represent the birth and the maturity of the soul, can be received but once, and may never on any account be repeated.

III. But even when a man is grown up he still needs food and nourishment to enable him to continue to live and to exercise his energies. The same holds good in the spiritual order. Hence the Blessed Sacrament has been instituted to be the very food and life of his soul. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall have no life in you." "I am the bread of life; if any man eat of me, he shall live forever." (John vi.) And following out the analogy still further, we find that man is subject to maladies of various kinds, which call for a physician. When suffering from cholera or fever, or any other disease, he discloses his trouble to the physician, who at once sets to work to cure him.

IV. So it is in the spiritual order. Our fever is pride; our fever is ambition; our fever is lust, or avarice, or gluttony, or hatred. Our soul, subject to many spiritual diseases, needs a remedy and a physician just as much as our body. And how is this need met? By the institution of yet another Sacrament, namely, the Sacrament of Penance, in which the penitent consults the spiritual physician, and is freed from his spiritual ailments and diseases by the power of absolution.

V. But the human race must be propagated and children must be born to supply the place of the thousands that daily fall beneath the keen sickle of death. To marry is the natural and the ordinary ambition of most men. But it is a crisis in their lives. On their marriage day they enter upon a new life, and take upon themselves a fresh set of duties and obligations, and need correspondingly special graces and helps. Hence, here again, God mercifully comes to their assistance, and has instituted a special Sacrament for their special benefit. Thus Marriage is no longer a

simple contract, but a great Sacrament, by which special graces are conferred, in virtue of which the contracting parties are able to bear, with true Christian fortitude, all the tribulations incident to that state, to preserve a mutual love and fidelity to one another, as the indissolubility of the bond of marriage requires, and to bring up their children in the love and fear of God.

VI. But something more is still needed for the perfection and completeness of a Christian society. To serve God properly men need instructors and teachers to fulfil His law; it must be duly proposed to them by competent persons; and if they are to avail themselves of the Sacraments, there must be men set aside to administer them. This shows at once the need of yet another great Sacrament, namely the Sacrament of Orders, by which a select few are set aside and receive the power to preach the Gospel (Matt. x. 18), to consecrate the Holy Eucharist and to offer up sacrifice (Luke xxii. 19), to forgive sin (John xx. 22), and to perform other important and sacred functions. Hence St. Paul observes: "Every high priest, taken from among men, is appointed for men in things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin." (Heb. v. 1.)

VII. There remains one more important crisis in a man's life to be considered, and that is the solemn act by which he yields his spirit up to God, when his earthly course has run. There is no more important and no more critical moment in a man's earthly career than when he has to lay down his earthly task and to appear for judgment before the dreaded tribunal of almighty God. At that last moment all the powers of hell unite to harass and distress him, and, if possible, to drive him to despair. It is a moment which is to decide his fate forever and ever, and on which his eternity depends. If help and protection and confidence are ever needed, it is especially in that last contest, upon which everything turns. And here again we note the goodness and benignity of God, who

has instituted the Sacrament of Extreme Unction to meet this special trial and danger, and to help the anxious soul to pass through the throes of death with calmness and resignation and fortitude.

It is the Council of Trent itself that especially calls our attention to the need for this Sacrament. "As our most merciful Redeemer, who desired that His servants should at all times be provided with wholesome remedies against the darts of their enemies, in the other Sacraments gives Christians the greatest help to enable them to pass their days in a Christian manner, so He hath fortified the latter end of our life with the most powerful protection of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. For, though our adversary seeks and seizes, during our whole life, every possible occasion of ruining our souls, yet *there is no time wherein he more vehemently exerts all his strength* and art to ruin us entirely, and destroy, if possible, our confidence in the mercy of God, than when he sees the last moment of life approaching." (Sess. xiv.; *in loco.*)

Thus we see that the seven Sacraments supply seven great wants, and enable man to pass successfully through the seven chief crises of his life. Now we may here observe that, though the graces they bring to the worthy recipient are spiritual and impervious to the senses, yet they are conveyed by means of visible forms. Why, it may be asked, should God bestow His supernatural favors upon us by means of outward signs and material symbols, such as oil, in Extreme Unction, and water, in Baptism, and bread, in the Holy Eucharist?

The reason is because He adapts His methods to our nature. We are not pure spirits, but beings, composed of body as well as of soul; so that, even in our most spiritual operations we constantly make use of material and physical elements.

Are not my thoughts and my reasonings of a spiritual nature? Certainly! There is neither length nor breadth nor thickness nor size nor color nor shape to

an intellectual idea. Yet, when I wish to convey that idea to others I at once proceed to clothe it in language; and to express it in words and sounding sentences, and it is borne along into the minds of others by sensible signs, which either strike the ear, or else (as in the case of writing) address themselves to the eye, but are, in both cases, material.

In a similar way God makes use of visible things as the vehicles of His invisible graces and blessings. In Baptism He cleanses the soul through the washing of the body; and in the Blessed Sacrament He feeds the soul by the consecrated species which His minister places on the very tongue of the communicant. The *external* action is such as to symbolize the effect of the *invisible* grace, though, of course, the action is a real cause, as well as a symbol. Thus the pouring of the water on the living, palpable flesh of the child both suggests and yet effects the interior and invisible washing and purifying of the soul within, which really and truly takes place, only in a manner impervious to the senses. And the species of bread, beneath which is concealed the very Body and Blood of Christ, suggests and announces to every beholder that the sacred Body and Blood of Christ, so received, acts upon the soul, as bread acts upon the body, *i. e.*, feeding it and strengthening it and sustaining its life and vigor.

Signs and ceremonies appointed by men, or even by the Church, for devotional purposes, do not convey grace, nor do they forgive sin, since they are not of divine institution. The Sacraments, on the contrary, are directly instituted by God himself, and it is He that gives supernatural efficiency to material instruments. It is God, not man, who acts in the Sacraments. The ministry of men, the substances used, the words uttered, and so forth, are but the conditions under which He acts; but in all cases the chief agent is God, who remits original sin in Baptism, absolves in the Sacrament of Penance, consecrates in the Mass, and so on, of the other channels of divine grace. Hence, as compared with the Sacraments, all other

ceremonies are what St. Paul calls mere "weak and needy elements." (Gal. iv. 9.)

But, there is a further reason why God should convey His graces under visible forms, *viz.*, to unite us all more closely together. The Church is a single, perfectly organized society, and all its members form but one mystical body, with Christ as its head. In fact, unity is the chief mark of the true Church. But how is this unity to be exhibited to the world and made manifest? Not only by all acknowledging one supreme head, the Pope, but also by all participating in the same Sacraments and sacrifice. Since the Sacraments are conferred under visible forms, we can not receive them without giving public testimony of our faith, and of our fellowship with the millions of other Catholics spread throughout the world. We thereby prove ourselves to be members of the same Church, and sharers in the same benefits, and sheep of the same divine Shepherd, who leads His flock into rich and fruitful pastures.

Most of the Sacraments may be repeated, as the need arises. There are three, however, which impress an indelible character on the soul, and these can be received but once. We have already alluded to two out of the three: namely, Baptism and Confirmation. To these must likewise be added the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The "character," as it is called, is a mark impressed upon the soul by each of these three Sacraments, which denotes that the person who bears it has been in some special way consecrated and dedicated to the service of God. Thus the mark impressed in Baptism denotes that the person who bears it has been made a true member of the Church of Christ, and is entitled to all the other Sacraments of the Church, and to eternal fellowship with Jesus Christ. Should he forfeit this title, and be lost, the character still endures—but for his greater torment—for it will remind him forever in hell of the high state from which he has fallen. The character received in Confirmation denotes that the person who bears it has been duly

received into the militia of the Lord, and has engaged to fight manfully and perseveringly on the side of justice and right, so long as life lasts, and foes have to be overcome. Finally, the character received in Holy Orders denotes that the person upon whom it is impressed has been consecrated to serve at the altar, to administer the Sacraments, and that he has received exceptional powers for the advantage of souls committed to his charge.

Since the Sacraments are the divinely appointed channels of grace, we can not value them too highly, nor show gratitude enough to God, who has so lovingly and so generously placed them within our reach.

As to their necessity, we may observe, in conclusion, that though all are necessary, yet not all are necessary *to all classes* of persons. Some of the Sacraments are intended for particular persons and states of life, and those only are obliged to have recourse to them who embrace those states, such as Holy Orders and Matrimony. The other five are intended for the common wants of all Christians; and therefore all are obliged to receive them, under pain of forfeiting the special graces they confer, the privation of which must entail serious spiritual loss. This is clear, since Christ is free Master of His gifts, and may require what conditions He pleases from His creatures.

And as the fruits of the Sacraments will be more or less abundant, according to the more or less perfect dispositions of the recipient, it is of the utmost importance that we should carefully prepare ourselves for their reception, and that we should approach them with a full sense of our great need and of God's infinite goodness in placing such efficacious remedies within our reach.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

On Answer to Prayer

Text:—"If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

OF all the duties incumbent on a Christian, prayer is undoubtedly one of the most pressing as well as one of the most fruitful. Prayer is to the soul very much what food is to the body. As the body grows faint and weak and falls an easy prey to disease and finally dies, if deprived of its natural nourishment, so the soul likewise grows faint and weak and falls an easy prey to temptation, and finally perishes if deprived of its supernatural nourishment, which is prayer. Hence it is not surprising that the Holy Scripture is always urging and exhorting us to make a generous and frequent use of this marvelous means of spiritual grace and strength. "Let nothing hinder thee from praying always." (Ecclus. xviii. 22.) "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thes. v. 17.) "We ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke xviii. 1.) "Pray one for another, that you may be saved." (James v. 16.) "Cry to me, and I will hear thee" (Jer. xxxiii. 3), says the Holy Spirit of God. Of such priceless value, and of such extreme necessity is prayer, and at the same time of such extraordinary efficacy, that it would hardly be possible to exaggerate its importance. Now the enemy of our souls is as fully conscious of this as we are; indeed it is to be feared that he is even immeasurably more conscious of it. It ought not, then to surprise us that he should do all in his power to draw us away from this holy exercise, or that he should leave no stone unturned in order to hinder and discourage us from having recourse to this fountain of salvation. He suggests all kinds of specious reasons why man should not pray. He sows every variety of difficulty in the hearts of

those who expose themselves to his influence. Hence his clients, *i. e.*, men of the world, are ever putting forward objections to the practise of prayer.

Infidel professors of science especially, and worldly minded philosophers, and "men of superior knowledge" are ever ready to point out the "uselessness" and the "utter futility" of praying. They raise difficulties of all kinds, and suggest quite a series of puzzling questions in order to disconcert us, and to trouble us, and to raise doubts in our minds.

To carefully consider all these in detail would demand far more time than lies at our disposal; but it may be advantageous to examine one or two of them, as samples of the rest. Let us, then, select for examination the objection which appears to be the strongest and at the same time the most widely spread. For, when we come to see how very little there really is in that, we shall think less perhaps of the others.

This objection generally meets us in the form of a question. What, we are asked, is the use of praying? What purpose can it possibly serve to go down on your knees and to beg the Almighty to grant you special favors, such as, for example, the continuance of good health; or recovery from disease; a safe journey; success in some enterprise; a suitable partner for your daughter; or a good position for your son? Now tell me, in the name of common sense, do you really imagine that God will—just on account of your prayer—suspend the laws of nature? Or that He will interfere in the order of the universe? Are you so simple and so utterly unacquainted with the first elements of science as to be unaware that everything throughout the cosmos follows a regular and a necessary sequence, and that every event is a necessary effect of preceding causes? Prayer may be excused in an unreasoning savage, or in an uneducated barbarian, but not in a man of education. Not in one who knows, or who at least ought to know, that the entire universe is so closely knit together, and so intimately connected in every part, and so finely balanced, that to inter-

rupt, or to check, or to change the course of a single force, would be to throw everything out of gear, and to introduce widespread disorder and disaster, just as it would affect the motion of every wheel and of every escapement in some gigantic and intricate clock, if but one small wheel be removed, or if but one tiny spring be tampered with. No! No power—without a direct miracle, which we are not now contemplating—can lay a finger upon any one part of the beautiful and wonderful machinery of the universe, so admirably poised, so delicately adjusted, so mysteriously interwoven, without creating disorder and confusion far and wide. Law everywhere prevails. Every force, every energy, every motion, every development, disposes itself according to a certain and fixed plan. Nothing happens by chance. The mote in the sunbeam dances to the rhythm of positive law. Nature admits of no exceptions; recognizes no violation of her canons; suffers no interference. She will not abrogate her rule, or reverse the least of her decrees, no, not though the whole world lay prostrate in prayer. No leaf would cling to the parent tree one moment beyond its allotted time; no grain of floating dust, no wandering mote would hasten its flight through the air, beyond the speed determined by its environment, even though all the world went down on their knees.

Such, dear brethren, is the position taken up by many unbelievers at the present. Such are the reasons by which they would persuade us to give up praying as an idle and useless employment.

Now, these arguments may be specious, and to some minds even captivating; but they are really baseless and wholly unsound. They have just that slight flavor of truth in them which is needed to make them palatable and to give them currency, but nothing more. Of course, nature is one vast complicated whole, intimately bound together. Of course, its parts are so delicately connected that to touch a single one of them is, as it were, to send a thrill throughout the entire organism. But (and this is the important considera-

tion) it is not the facts, but the inferences drawn from the facts, that are fallacious and misleading. Although any interference with the prescribed order of events, any suspension or revocation of the laws of nature means a modification of much else besides the actual law directly concerned; yet this modification is so insensible and so infinitesimal, that it can not be treated as a serious objection, especially when we bear in mind the dominion that even man himself exercises over material things.

In dealing with this matter, we must begin by inviting you, my brethren, to carefully consider certain truths with regard to our own nature, so highly and so richly endowed by God.

Among other prerogatives, man enjoys that of free-will and of spontaneous action. He is a self-directive being. Man is not the mere plaything of the forces contending around him. He is not a feather, at the mercy of every idle wind that blows. No! He can initiate action. He can excite forces, predetermined by nothing beyond himself. He is able, not by virtue of any external *stimuli,* but by an act of personal volition, to act upon forces to change their direction; to unite them; to divide them, or even to suspend their operation by matching one force against another, and so throwing them into equilibrium, and in ten thousand ways to interfere with the ordinary course of request—or if we prefer the word—at the "prayer" of some cherished child, or of some dependent or subordinate, less versed than he is in the laws of cause and effect. And is God less able than man to work His will in His own creation? Is He less able to answer prayer? Man may flood the desert, divide the course of a river, clear a forest and drain a marsh; or he may so confine and entomb a force within the iron boiler of a steam engine as to make it fly through space along its railway track at fifty or sixty miles an hour. Is there any interference with nature here? Is there any dislocation of the harmony of things? Evidently not. Man merely plays upon the forces around him,

as a harper plays upon his harp strings. Man can not, of course, annihilate nor can he create so much as a grain of sand; nor can he create or absolutely destroy the simplest force; but what he can do is to acquaint himself with the characteristics of existing forces, to direct them, to utilize them, to turn them to account, and to employ them for various purposes.

Now, what God does in answer to prayer need no more interfere with the established order of the universe than what man himself does. There need be no more "meddling" and "upsetting" when God interferes to bring about some advantage, or to ward off a calamity from a person, a city, or a nation that has invoked His aid, than when I interfere by my free will.

When I divert the course of a stream from some beleaguered village and so cause a water famine, or when I direct it so as to irrigate a desert and make it bloom as a garden, am I breaking and disorganizing the delicate web of causes and effects which runs through the entire universe? But for me, acting with complete freedom, the whole course of events above referred to would have been different. In one sense I do really interfere, because I introduce changes and modifications which, but for my action, never would have been; but in another sense, I do not interfere; that is to say I do not disturb the general harmony and order of the cosmos.

If a poor, weak, ignorant creature, such as I am, can do so much, surely the Creator may do immeasurably more, and do it without the dislocation of any law? If we stumble when we come to think of God's control over the universe, it is—so it appears to me simply—because we have not rightly apprehended the extent even of our own control.

Take an illustration of our own power over material things. Thus: It is the nature of a stone to fall to the ground. This is the law. Quite true. But can I not overcome the natural effect of that law, and without any violence? Undoubtedly. By the exer-

tion of muscular action, I can stay it from falling; or, by raising it vertically in my hand, I can cause it to move even in exactly the opposite direction, *i. e., away* from the earth instead of *toward* it. The voluntary movements of my own body, such as the raising and extending my arms, or the use of hands and fingers, are results entirely dependent on my own free will, which is a faculty of my soul, an immaterial and wholly spiritual substance. In what manner that which is spiritual can act upon that which is material; in what manner, that is to say, my soul can act upon my body is a mystery; but that it *does* act on matter is a fact of every day experience. And as it acts directly on my body, so it acts indirectly and *by means of my body,* on other material objects also.

A little boy in a crowd comes and "prays" me to lift him up, in order that he may see a passing procession. Gravity holds him down. But I can overcome gravity; and *in answer to the child's prayer,* I can, by a simple act of the will, extend my arms about the child and exert muscular strength enough to raise him above the heads of the people so that he may see. Now, when God, in His turn, answers prayers, He does but do, in a higher and sublimer and in a divine way, very much what He has enabled me to do in a smaller and mere human way. Take a somewhat different instance. Thus: I can, through my knowledge of chemistry, bring two gases together and actually cause water to appear where before there was none; or I may cause water to disappear in two invisible gases. This I can do when I wish and as often as I wish, yet there is no disturbance created in the universe at large! Why, then, in the name of common sense, should God's action on creation, when granting our prayers—let us say for rain, or for fine weather—be a source of any greater disturbance than that?

Though God, being omnipotent, can create or annihilate, and though all things are necessarily and absolutely submissive to His will, yet is there any necessity for the exercise of such infinite power in the ordi-

nary economy of His dealings with His children? Surely His miracles even may all be accounted for by a much simpler action on the part of Him who knows all things? All we have to postulate is His complete control over all existing forces and powers; a control, though infinitely superior, yet analogous to that which He has imparted, in a limited degree, to man himself. On such an hypothesis God, in answer to prayer, does not introduce any disturbing element into the beautiful harmonies of creation. He neither adds to nor does he subtract from the sum of things; He does but play upon existing forces with a master's hand, and produce any result He wishes.

We do not ordinarily expect direct miracles in response to our petitions, nor do we ask for them, though even miracles may, of course, be granted. Then consider one of the greatest of miracles, *viz.*, the raising of a dead man to life.

A man's soul being immortal, all we are here concerned with is the restoration of life to the organism —to the limbs and organs. Now what is organic life? It arises from the presence of the soul, and the play of certain forces upon the material atoms and molecules of which the body is composed. The body's health and its vitality are dependent upon the due exercise of these forces, whether we take them to be in the soul or merely controlled by the soul. Now, these forces have not ceased to exist, since it is an axiom of science that nothing can be driven out of existence. They are merely transformed into their equivalents, or else they are exerting their energies elsewhere. In any case, to restore life, as our Lord did in the case of Lazarus at the request of Mary and Martha, is merely to call back the soul into the organism and to reestablish within it the various scattered vital forces in such a manner that the atoms of the body should readjust themselves in proper order, under the impulse of the said forces. To God this must be as simple an operation as to us would be the readjusting a house of cards that a child has shattered. And

not only as easy, but affecting as little the rest of creation.

God "creates" (*i. e.*, makes from nothing) man's soul; but He does not "create" (*i. e.*, make from nothing) man's body and his sensitive organs. All these are manufactured out of preexisting materials. All, therefore, that would seem to be required to restore a sick body to health or a dead body to life, is the power, firstly, to recall the soul, and secondly, to control and to reinstate these materials. There can be no more violation of the harmony of things in God doing this than there is violation in our manufacturing incandescent gas out of coal; and there can be no more difficulty to God in restoring life to the body which has lost it than there is difficulty to us in making a fresh supply of gas to feed the flame anew when it has become exhausted or burned out. A jet of light is kept burning by the regular flow of gas from the meter; in a similar way the life of the body is kept up by the regular and persistent action of the vital forces. Should the supply of gas nourishing the flame get cut off or exhausted, the flame dies. Now just as we can rekindle the jet and renew the supply of gas to feed the flame without upsetting all nature, so can God, when the vital forces of the body are spent, renew them once more and kindle again the light of life without causing chaos to come again!

One can not see how any such action on the part of God can produce any disastrous consequences on the harmony of nature, or how it can disturb the law of the "conservation of energy," etc., any more than the actions of mere men.

If a difficulty be urged, it should be set a step further back. The difficulty, *if made at all*, should be made concerning the creation from nothing of the soul itself. But to any one believing, as every Catholic is bound to believe, that the soul has been created out of nothing, and that it possesses freedom of action, every other difficulty must disappear.

We offer the preceding considerations for what they

are worth; the real, solid, and all-sufficient argument —nay, the positive proof that God can and does hear prayers—is abundantly supplied by the facts themselves.

When we are asked if God can answer prayer; when asked whether we can really, honestly believe that He will alter, or transform, or suspend the ordinary course of events at our request, we reply, without one moment's hesitation, "Yes!" A thousand times yes! We go further. We boldly affirm not merely that He can or that He will, but that He actually has done this again and again.

The life of Jesus Christ, the God Incarnate, affords us innumerable instances. He was constantly performing prodigies and wonders and miracles in answer to prayer. He gave sight to the blind; He gave health to the sick; He gave hearing to the deaf; He cured the halt and the lame; He changed water into wine; stilled the tempest; raised the dead; and proved by a thousand practical and startling illustrations and examples that He both could and would incline His ears to the petitions of His children, and grant them favors and graces; and furthermore, that He could, when needful, control events and produce changes and transformations in this visible world, without in any way interfering with the general prescribed order of things, or throwing out of gear the complicated and most intricate mechanism of the nuiverse.

What He did then He can do still. His hands are not shortened, nor is His power curtailed. He is yet Lord and Master in His own creation. The very laws which He has established were formed and drawn up —if we may express ourselves in a human way—with a view to our welfare and to our essential happiness and so as to be amenable to the influences of prayer.

Should we entertain any doubt upon this point, we have but to reflect that it is no other than the Holy Spirit of God Himself that at once commands us to pray and that promises to grant our petitions. Are we so utterly lost to all sense of God's veracity and

goodness as to suppose that He would urge us to ask Him for favors and gifts, or that He would entreat and conjure us to fly to Him for help in all our necessities, if at the same time he had so bound Himself down by His own laws, or so fettered His action as to be unable to come to our assistance or to defend us from all evil?

We may further appeal not only to the authority of Holy Writ, but to the verdict of mankind, to the experience of countless generations of Christians in every part of the world. Their testimony is unanswerable and overwhelming. All feel the need of prayer; all, at least, in times of special trial or danger, practise prayer; and all who have betaken themselves to humble, earnest, and persevering prayer know and possess an inward consciousness of its power.

The popular and oft-repeated objection to which I referred in my opening words fades away and vanishes so soon as we fearlessly examine it, departing from our sight like some gruesome shadow before the bright sun of eternal and unassailable Truth.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION

Prayer: Its Necessity

Text:—"Be prudent and watch in prayers."—(*From the Epistle of the day.*)

TO-DAY, my dear brethren, I am about to speak to you upon one of the most important and practical subjects that can possibly engage your attention. I mean the subject of prayer, which must always enter so very largely into the texture of every true Christian life.

And what do we really understand by prayer? In the widest acceptation of the term it means simply, *the having recourse to God.*

Without referring to any special form of prayer we will speak of prayer in general, and point out its vital importance; not only for such persons as are aspiring after perfection, but for every one who desires to save his soul, and to escape the fires of hell.

The holy Scriptures speak very clearly on this point, and are never weary of pointing out the duty we lie under, of having recourse to God in all our necessities. "We ought always to pray, and not to faint," says St. Luke (xviii), and here "ought" (*oportet*) clearly implies a real obligation. So, again, when St. Matthew (xxvi) says: "Watch and pray, *lest ye enter into temptation,*" he evidently implies that without prayer we shall not succeed in vanquishing temptation. Similarly, when our Lord himself tells us to ask and we shall receive, to seek and we shall find, and to knock and it shall be opened to us, He certainly infers that he who will not take the trouble to ask, and seek, and knock, can not reckon on receiving the help that he requires.

Theologians are agreed that prayer is not merely a help and a safeguard, but that for adults it is a nec-

essary means of grace which none can continue to neglect without peril to their salvation. And this doctrine is founded on the undoubted fact that man is utterly helpless when left to himself. "Without me," says our blessed Lord, "you can do nothing." (John xv. 5.) The divine assistance is needed not merely to enable us to triumph over exceptional difficulties, and to overcome special and great obstacles, but to take even one step in advance; nay, even to keep steadfastly and perseveringly in our present state of grace. St. Paul, speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit, goes so far as to say that not only is it impossible to become virtuous and holy without God's help, but that we can not even so much as wish for, or aspire after sanctity apart from His grace. "We are not sufficient to think anything" (*i. e.*, anything good) "of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." (2 Cor. iii. 5.)

God is the sole master of His gifts, and may assign what conditions He pleases for their bestowal. Did He so will, He might, of course, confer His favors without being asked. But this is not according to His plan. On the contrary, He wishes that we should recognize Him as our loving Father, protector and friend, and that we should realize our absolute dependence upon His generosity. Hence, He imposes a condition and that is that we should turn our thoughts to Him, and lift up our feeble hands in supplication before He rains down upon us His heavenly gifts. As a pious and learned theologian says: "We believe that no one approaches to be saved, except at the invitation of God; that no one who is invited actually works out his salvation, save by the help of God; and that no one merits this help, unless he prays." This doctrine is the doctrine of all theologians, even though expressed in somewhat different words. Thus St. Thomas lays it down (P. 3, q. xxxix, a. 5): "After Baptism continual prayer is necessary to man in order that he should reach Heaven; for, though by Baptism our sins are remitted there

still remains concupiscence, to assail us from within, as well as the world and the devil to assail us from without." He further explains this when he observes that "prayer is necessary not in order that God may know our necessities, but in order that we may be compelled to acknowledge Him as the one and only supreme source of all our graces." In fact, prayer is to the soul what food is to the body, the source of life and health and strength. And just as God does not provide us with corporal nourishment unless we bestir ourselves to obtain it; but obliges us to till the ground, and to sow corn and plant vines, in order that we may have bread to eat, and wine to drink, so has He ordained that we should exert ourselves, and humbly and earnestly pray, before He will feed and nourish our souls by His grace.

Spiritual writers declare that even the worst sinners would have been preserved from falling had they only made a proper use of this powerful means of defense. Speaking of Adam's disobedience, St. Thomas boldly affirms that "he sinned because he had not recourse to the divine assistance." And the same statement is made by St. Gelasius regarding the rebel angels: "Receiving the grace of God in vain, they could not persevere, because they did not pray."

And, if the angels and our first parents could not maintain in innocence, though they were created without sin and without concupiscence, how far more impossible must it be for us to persevere without prayer, who are born in original sin, and with so many and such strong natural inclinations to evil.

Indeed, some heretics, such as Luther and Iansenius, have gone so far as to say (falsely) that some of the commands of God are impossible for man, in his present state, to observe. It is quite true that man can not observe the law of God, nor obey His precepts, *if he neglect the duty of prayer;* but he can always obtain grace enough, and more than enough, by the asking; and so can always fulfil the divine commands. Since God is infinitely just and merciful, and will al-

ways come to the assistance of those who fly to Him for aid. Moreover, He has promised not once, but again and again to listen to the prayer of those who appeal to Him with confidence. "If you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you"; and, again, "ask, and you shall receive."

If a man complains of his weakness; if he declares that temptation is too strong and that he frequently succumbs, not because he is vicious, but because he is weak, let him remember that God has supplied a remedy in prayer, and that one who will not make use of the remedy has no excuse but his own culpable negligence. "If you have not the requisite strength," writes St. James, "why do you not ask for it? *You have it not, because you ask it not.*" (James iv. 2.) Hence the truth of St. Paul's words is abundantly borne out: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with the temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.) Consequently, we must be of good heart, and realize that, whatever may be the dangers encompassing us, and whatever may be the violence of the temptations assailing us, God will always give us the victory, if we make a generous use of prayer. Even the weakest and the lowliest amongst us may exclaim with the same trust and fearlessness as St. Paul himself: "I can do *all* things in Him who strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.)

The question may here be asked, How often must we pray? The evangelist, St. Luke, says, "We must pray always" (xviii. 1). This does not, of course, mean that we are to be always on our knees invoking God, which is more than can be expected of mortal man, and would seriously interfere with other duties of life. It means that prayer should be frequent, and should form a regular practise of daily life; so that, just as we are continually exposed to danger we should ever have recourse to this powerful defense.

There are, however, certain occasions when the obligation presses upon us with greater insistence, and

when we should be gravely at fault, if we neglected this means of salvation.

Three special occasions are pointed out by theologians. The first is when we find ourselves, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, exposed to any violent temptation. Perhaps our passions have been deeply stirred, and we feel ourselves strongly urged to some deed of vengeance, or of violence, or of lust. We grow conscious of our weakness, and of the need of some strong arm to defend us from ourselves. Then, like the Apostles, on the Lake of Galilee, amid the storm that threatened to overwhelm them, we must have recourse to God, and cry out, with all the fervor of our soul: *Salve nos, Domine, perimus!* ("Save us, O Lord, or we perish!") The neglect of prayer, under such circumstances, would argue not only great temerity, but almost a willingness, if not an actual desire, to indulge our passion and to commit sin.

Another occasion when prayer becomes especially urgent, is when we are in mortal sin, and, at the same time, in imminent danger of death. We stand then in very great danger of perishing everlastingly. The time remaining to us is short. We may soon grow unconscious. The devil, knowing his last opportunity is at hand, redoubles his efforts to secure the damnation of our souls. God alone can rescue us from his fangs, and bestow the grace of perfect sorrow; and, in order to obtain His assistance, it is our duty to address ourselves to Him with much earnestness and sincerity.

We are also especially bound to pray, when prayer seems the only means within our reach of avoiding any great calamity about to befall us, or those to whom we are specially bound, such as our own family or the State. If a great persecution breaks out, as in ancient Rome, under the pagan emperors, or as in England in the sixteenth century, and there is danger of apostasy and spiritual ruin, all should unite in earnest prayer to God; indeed, this should be done not only in times of spiritual, but even in times of

temporal, affliction, as beseems a Christian and God-fearing people. When the great city of Ninive was threatened with destruction, the inhabitants united in earnest prayer and penance and so averted the calamity that seemed about to overwhelm them.

Or, to take another instance from the inspired pages, when the dreaded Holofernes lay siege to Bethulia, and it seemed almost certain to fall into the hands of the Assyrians, the people, with one accord, prayed fervently to God, humbled themselves before Him, and put ashes on their heads. And God sent them a deliverer in the person of Judith. At a yet later date, when St. Peter, the ruler of the infant Church, was cast into prison, men did not stand idle and wring their hands, but "prayer was made without intermission" for his delivery, and he was miraculously released by the ministry of an angel, as we read in the Acts of the Apostels.

In a similar spirit we, too, should turn to God when any great danger threatens us, and beg the divine assistance, full of confidence that He, whose providence extends over all, and whose hands are on the helm of our fragile bark, can lead us safely through the most dangerous storms to the harbor of peace at last.

One of the strangest and saddest experiences of life is to see how little the great majority, even of Christians, pray. When we think on the one hand how easy it is to kneel down and converse with God, and when, on the other hand, we think of the marvelous fruits to be gained by so doing, we are at a loss to understand that so few should give themselves up to this holy exercise.

Most men pray but little at the best of times, and even that little in a most distracted and perfunctory manner. On the slightest pretext they will shorten their customary devotions, even if they do not omit them altogether; and act as though prayer, instead of being the most important action of the day, were the very least.

Let us, at least, refuse to be influenced by such evil

example, and resolve to pray not only regularly, but with the utmost attention and devotion. So far as earnestness and attention are concerned we may indeed learn a valuable lesson from men of the world.

When a servant wishes to obtain some great favor from his master, or a prince from his king, he does not approach him with his mind wandering and distracted; he does not look now to the right and now to the left to see what is going on around him. He does not mutter with his lips while his heart is occupied with other things, but he addresses himself to his master with the greatest earnestness, he fixes his gaze upon him, he represents his claims with the utmost insistence, adduces every reason he can think of why he should not be refused, and proves by his whole attitude and comportment how strongly he desires to have his petition granted.

On the other hand, to watch most people praying to God, one would be led to suppose that they recognized neither the majesty of the sovereign they address nor their own poverty and dependence. One would think, indeed, that they cared little whether their prayers were granted or refused, that they were merely going through a form to which they attached little or no importance, and that they knelt and recited their paters and aves, or their litanies and hymns, merely because they are recited by others, and they did not wish to be singular.

What fruit can we expect from prayers said in such a manner?

Let us resolve for the future to attach more importance to this holy exercise, and, whenever we address ourselves to God, let us pause to reflect, firstly, upon the dignity and the majesty of Him to whom we appeal, and then on our own misery and dependence. There is no better way of securing that lowliness and humility of heart which is the first condition of efficacious prayer than by exciting our faith in the infinite perfections and the unapproachable holiness and mercy and compassion of Our Father, who is in

Heaven, and who rains down His favors and graces upon all those who have recourse to Him in a proper spirit.

If we pray well, then all will go well. If we neglect this primary duty, then the whole of our spiritual life will suffer.

PENTECOST SUNDAY

The Church of God

Text:—"The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

THE venerable Catholic Church, which alone of all the Christian Churches traces its history back to the very time of Christ and the Apostles, differs from the multitude of non-Catholic sects in a great number of ways. Not only is it more ancient, but it is immeasurably more vast; in fact, it can claim a larger multitude of adherents than any other. To such an extent does it surpass them all, that it may be stated, without fear of cantradiction, that the One Holy Apostolic and Roman Catholic Church contains a larger number of subjects than all the infinite variety of Protestant sects put together. It is not the Church of a single country, as is the "Church of England," nor is it the Chruch of any particular individual, as is the Church "of Luther" (the Lutheran Church), or "of Calvin" (the "Calvinists"), but it is just what our Divine Lord intended His Church to be, *viz.*, the Church of the entire world. "Go into *the whole world*, and preach the Gospel to every creature." It is the Church of every nation. "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of *all the nations*." (Matt. xxviii.)

But the vastness of the Catholic Church is by no means its most remarkable feature. What must strike every one who gives the matter a little consideration, is its unity. Its unity is so marvellous, and so wholly unparalleled, that it is impossible to account for it except in one way: and that is by referring it to the special providence of God.

If we compare the Catholic Church with other Christian bodies, this difference becomes especially evident and striking. Where, humanly speaking,

unity should be much easier to maintain, it is found to have no existence, whereas, where, humanly speaking, it seems an impossibility, it is found in admirable perfection.

Consider, for instance, the Anglican Establishment. Everything here tends to make unity easy. The members of that National Church are almost all of one race. They all possess the same language, and live under the same form of government. They are already bound together by a thousand bonds. The sovereign is the head of the Church *and* of the nation, the bishops are all State officials, receiving from five to fifteen thousand pounds a year from the government, and the clergy, for the most part, come from the same public schools and are brought up in the same way. To any impartial observer it would seem that everything here made for unity. The British Church ought to be as united as the British Army or the British Navy, since it is quite as national, quite as insular, and quite as truly British.

But, what do we find? Not unity, but endless divisions. The Church of England is broken up into High Church, and Low Church, and Broad Church. And each of these three divisions are subdivided in countless further divisions and subdivisions. Not only the laity, but the clergy, and even the bishops are absolutely disagreed on the most vital points of doctrine, and will give a diametrically opposite interpretation to the selfsame text of Holy Scripture. One professes belief in the real Presence of Christ, in the "Lord's Supper," another declares it to be a mere memorial of Christ, in which no change is wrought in the elements, and only ordinary bread is received. One will defend the doctrine of Priestly Absolution, and another will denounce it. And while this one will actually "Hear Confessions and impart Absolution," that one will describe such a practice as an unwarranted usurpation of a power which belongs to God alone!

In fact, it is found impossible, even within the ex-

tremely narrow borders of the Anglican Communion, to maintain unity of doctrine. Many, indeed, seem to have given up looking for it, and boast instead of its "comprehensiveness" which enables the Church of England, like a modern Noah's Ark, to hold within its small bulk creatures of every sort and condition. The Anglican Bishop of Carlisle (to mention but one) assures us, of what everyone by this time must be fully aware, that: "within the Church of England divisions are loudly rampant, strong and obvious, amounting at times to bitter hostility," while other members of the Episcopal bench are often heard to lament over what they describe as "our unhappy divisions."

In short, here, where everything should make unity easy, we find endless divisions. Now, let us turn to the Catholic Church. There, on the contrary, everything seems to make unity not alone difficult, but impossible. In the first place, the larger the number, the more difficult is it to secure unity: and, as we have already pointed out, the Catholic Church is immeasurably vaster than any of the sects. In the second place, she is composed not of one, but of all nations. English and French, Spanish and Dutch, Americans and Germans, Poles and Russians, and the inhabitants of both torrid and frigid zones. She receives the obedience of all classes, the educated and the uneducated, the rich and the poor, the refined and the rude. And what is more, she is as well able to satisfy the most refined as the most vulgar, and the most highly intellectual no less than the simplest and the most unlettered. By some secret power, she forces and moulds one and all into one close and compact body, according to the admonition of St. Paul: "Be ye *all one body* and one spirit." (Eph. iv. 4.) Though differing in all else, the Catholics of every land are absolutely united in Faith and Doctrine. It matters not whether they be Greeks or Armenians, Irish or Southsea Islanders, noble or ignoble, they all listen to the same Voice, obey the same authority, and recognize the same supreme Pastor. And, as a consequence, they manifest

a unity so absolute, so unique, so entirely above nature, that one cannot help being struck by it. It is the presence of this Unity, where unity looks so impossible, that has again and again proved the guiding star to many a tempest tossed traveller, in quest of the true Church. Innumerable zealous men and women searching for the "pearl-of-great-price," the glorious Church of Christ, have seen in this conspicuous Unity the infallible sign for which they were looking. It is the sign selected by our Lord Himself. The world was to know and recognize His Church and to distinguish it from all other claimants, precisely by this remarkable and exceptional Unity. It has been revealed to us that God-incarnate prayed that His followers might be ONE. And why? There is no shadow of doubt about the reason, since He Himself tells us. It is "That the world may know that Thou didst send Me." (John xviii. 23.)

Unity, like Catholicity and Sanctity and Apostolicity, is one of the great marks of the Church; perhaps the greatest of all. But how has it been secured? We may find the solution in to-day's Gospel. Before departing from this world, our Lord promised His Apostles that He would send upon His Church the Holy Spirit. Further He added: "When the Spirit of Truth has come to you, He will teach you all truth." Truth always produces unity. Why do all men believe the multiplication table? Why are all agreed about that? Because all see that it is true.

Now let us condsider this, as carefully as such an important subject deserves.

1. To begin with, let us bear in mind that Christ came down from Heaven to teach us the truth. "To this end have I been born, and to this end have I come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." The truth which he was to teach was to inform and enlighten and to bind into one body, not merely one generation, but all generations. It was to be handed down, century by century, to the end of time, and be a source of life and salvation to all men, who should

be born during the course of the slowly unfolding ages.

This was a gigantic task. No one but the Infinite could possibly guarantee the safe transmission of a whole body of doctrine, through the passing years, without alteration, or loss, or addition, or injury of any kind. Man is by nature fickle, unreliable, and inconstant. He is also easily misled, easily deceived, and readily influenced by prejudice, by self-interest and by inclination. How can we trust him to hand down, in all its fulness and perfection, the message entrusted to him? How can we feel any confidence that no changes have been introduced, and that the deposit of Truth has been, in no way, tampered with or interferred with, or erroneousy delivered?

We should have no solid grounds for confidence, were it not for the explicit promise of Christ Himself, that He would remain with His Church for ever, and that He would send down upon it His Holy Spirit, which would remain with it for all time, and teach it all truth.

2. Now there are several points that we must keep in mind, when we are dealing with this subject. In the first place it is essential to remember that Christ is God. He could, therefore, really look into the future, and could see exactly the manner in which His doctrine would be misinterpreted, misrepresented, and rejected by heretics and rebellious and obstinate men. He who beholds the most distant future as clearly as the actually present, knew full well that, unless safeguarded by Him, His teaching would become by degrees so mutilated, perverted, and corrupted as to be scarcely recognizable. Further, being God, He was fully able to provide an adequate defence, which would secure purity of doctrine to the end of time. He Himself and His Holy Spirit would undertake that defence, and would "lead the Church into all truth," and would "bring to its mind all that He had taught." "Ye shall receive power," said our Lord to His Apostles, "when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be my

witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the *uttermost parts of the earth.*" (Acts i. 8.) Now, if they were constituted witnesses, it could be only of truth: and their testimony might always be relied upon, with absolute confidence, because they were acting, not in virtue of their own unaided strength, but in virtue of, and by the power of, the Holy Ghost: "*Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*"

With even still greater force and explicitness, the same truth is stated by the beloved Disciple in the 14th Chapter of his Gospel: "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, *will teach you all things,* and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." If that does not mean Infallibility, then I know not what it possibly can mean.

And since this is a most important point, let us, before passing on, recall yet another text. St. John (xiv. 16) informs us that our Divine Master addressing the Apostles, said: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter." And for what purpose? Listen: "that He may be *with you for ever,* even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive." These words contain a clear promise of infallibility.

3. For it stands to reason, that the "Spirit of Truth" cannot be with a fallible Church. To declare that the "Spirit of Truth" is with every warring sect and with every conflicting church, and that God is teaching contradictory doctrines and irreconcilable creeds is to be guilty of blasphemy. No! It is as clear as the light of the day, that the Church of Christ must be by the very terms of its institution, an INFALLIBLE Church. No other corresponds to our Lord's description. Thus, (a) He Himself is to remain with it for ever. How can He be truly said to be with a Church, if that Church can err? (b) The Holy Ghost is to bring to mind all whatsoever He has taught them. How is such a promise compatible with error? Either God can fail in His promises, which is

absurd, or His Church is infallible. Be good enough to note further, (c) that our Lord, when commanding His followers to obey His Church, makes no distinction between Himself and His Disciples. He tells them that when they listen to and obey His representatives, they are listening to, and obeying Him. "Who heareth you, heareth Me, and who despiseth you, despiseth Me." Now, if the Church of God can teach error, in short, if the Church of God be not infallible, how can it be said that "in hearing it, we are always hearing God himself"? Clearly, these words imply that the Church enjoys the prerogative of infallibility. Nor is this all. If the Church were not infallible, God could not, in justice, have commanded all men, under pain of eternal damnation, to hear her voice. If an authority be not infallible, then it may err. If it may err, then we cannot always be under the strict obligation of obeying it and believing it. It would be most unreasonable to attach the greatest of penalties to any refusal of belief in what is acknowledged throughout to be liable to mistakes and exposed to error. Since then our Lord (d) threatens eternal damnation to all who will not accept the teaching of His Church, surely His Church must be infallible. "Go ye, and preach the Gospel . . . he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, *shall be damned,* or condemned." (Mark xvi. 15-16.) It would be most unjust and unfair to condemn a man for doubting a purely human and fallible teacher. To be condemned to hell for all eternity, simply for holding a different view from a teacher, whom all acknowledge to be as liable to error as other men, and who lays no claim to infallibility, would be most outrageous and intolerable. So that we may assert, without the shadow of a doubt, that God never would and never could command all His creatures to "hear," that is to say, to accept the teaching of an authority, under pain of eternal torment, unless He first secured such authority from all risk of error and from all possibility of heresy and spiritual corruption.

4. Yet, there can be no doubt whatever but that God commands obedience, under the sanction of eternal death. "He that disbelieveth shall be damned." Nothing less than this extreme penalty awaits those who, wilfully and deliberately, reject the teaching of the Apostles and their successors. Why this awful punishment? Why so terrible and so appalling a sanction? Obviously because, in disbelieving, such persons are disbelieving not fallible man, which could be no such enormous crime in the sight of God, but because they are refusing to believe the infallible words of God Himself, and despising, not the creature, but the sovereign Creator. "Who heareth you, heareth Me, and who despiseth you, despiseth Me." (Luke v. 16.)

We are told, in to-day's Gospel, that "When the Spirit of Truth is come, He will teach us all truth." That Blessed Spirit has now come, and dwells ever amongst us. We are, therefore, perfectly secure in the possession of the whole truth, as revealed by Jesus Christ.

But, here we reach a most important conclusion. Since it is most unquestionably true that the Church of Christ is infallible, it follows, as night the day, that any church which is not infallible cannot be His Church. A fallible church in no way corresponds with the idea or the plan that Christ designed. His Church is "the Pillar and Ground of Truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15) to be believed without hesitation, without doubt, and as Christ Himself.

But, what churches are infallible? Are there any among the immense multitude of so-called "Christian Churches" that even so much as lay claim to so grand a prerogative? No! There is not one single church but the Catholic and Roman Church that has ever dared to put forth a claim to infallibility. Quite the contrary. All other churches absolutely reject such a position, as absurd and meaningless. They even raise the finger of disdain at the Catholic Church, and hold her up to scorn, because of her sublime claim, or

what they prefer to call her "ridiculous pretensions."

They scarcely seem to be aware in so doing they are bearing a testimony, however unconscious, to the fact that the Catholic Church is the only true Church established by Christ, and the only one bearing His impress, and endowed with His special character.

While the sects without exception repudiate all claim to infallibility, and openly profess their inability to teach without at least the possibility of error, the Catholic Church has always asserted, and still does assert most emphatically, that she is the unerring guide and infallible teacher, established by Jesus Christ, for the salvation of the world.

Let us express the syllogism thus: An infallible teacher exists somewhere, without doubt, for Christ has so declared. But, even according to their own showing, this unerring teacher does not abide with them. Therefore, the only conclusion we can come to is that he is to be found in the One Holy and Apostolic Catholic Church, which must therefore be the Church established by Christ.

5. Further, every figure made use of by our Lord suggests unity. He compares His Church to (a) one flock, under one Shepherd, to (b) a vine, to (c) a tree, to (d) a living body. As the body is ONE and hath many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are ONE body, so also is Christ. So again: "In ONE spirit we were all baptized into ONE body." (1 Cor. xii. 12.) He likewise speaks of His Church as (e) a House, (f) a City, and (g) a Kingdom, all of which suggest UNITY as their most salient characteristic. And what is to be the source of this Unity? Truth. As error separates men into various camps, so Truth draws them together in one body. Error is a prolific source of division: truth is a source of cohesion.

Consider further, that while, on the one hand, Jesus Christ promised that His Church should be protected from all dangers, and that the "gates of hell should never prevail against it," so, on the other hand, He

declared that "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." (Matt. xii. 25.)

6. From these two propositions, two consequences follow: First, that whatever may happen to other churches, His at all events will never be "divided against itself," that is to say, there will be no differences of doctrine. Secondly, that wherever we detect such divisions and differences of doctrine, we may rest assured that wherever else His Church may be, it most certainly is not there. If UNITY be a sign of the true Church, then any want of UNITY must be the sign of a false church.

If, indeed, as we read in this day's Gospel, "The Spirit of Truth has come, to teach us all Truth," we must be all of one mind and of one heart, and believe in "one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism."

7. In conclusion, then, let us return thanks to God, who has bestowed upon us, without any merit of our own, the unspeakably great gift of the true Faith. And let us strive to show our gratitude, by becoming Catholics, not merely in name, but also in every truth, loyal, practical, and persevering. For, what will it avail us to possess the Faith, unless we practise it, and carry out all it prescribes! If the true Faith carries with it many privileges, it also carries with it many and great obligations. Bear that fact in mind, and act with generosity and zeal, and God will be ever near to you, to help your endeavor. Amen.

TRINITY SUNDAY

The Nature of God

Text:—"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—(*From the Gospel of the day.*)

THERE is no truth so clearly written upon the face of nature, as the existence of God. No one whose mind is not hopelessly blinded by pride or prejudice, can fail to detect the most startling indications of His goodness, His power, and His wisdom in the immense universe, that upon every side, stretches around him to untold distances. Hence the Seraphim, in the vision accorded to Isaias, cried out, one to another, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Hosts, *all the earth is full of Thy glory.*" (Is. vi. 3.) While the Psalmist, in similar words, reminds us that "the heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands." (Ps. xviii.) Well then may St. Paul assure the Romans that they who refuse to acknowledge this fundamental truth, are without excuse. "The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world are *clearly* seen, being understood by the things that are made, His eternal power and divinity, so that they (who believe not) are inexcusable." (Rom. i. 19.) In a similar manner the wise man, under inspiration of the Holy Ghost writes: "By the greatness of the beauty and of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby." (Wisdom xiii.) Indeed any doubt upon this point that might otherwise have lingered in our minds, has been swept away by a solemn decree of the General Council of the Vatican, which declares that even apart from any supernatural revelation, man may arrive at the knowledge of the existence of a Supreme Being, by a proper exercise of his reason, and may even obtain some knowledge of many of His attributes, more espe-

cially of His goodness, wisdom and power, which are everywhere apparent.

There are, however, in God depths that no human plummet can ever sound, and riches that no human intelligence can ever measure. Of these one of the greatest and most incomprehensible, is that which the Church celebrates to-day. I refer to the adorable mystery of the ever Blessed Trinity.

This is a mystery that we could never have discovered for ourselves. It is no doubt true, that certain faint traces of it exist in the visible creation, but these traces do not stand out boldly and conspicuously so as to be readily seized. Hence, it became necessary that this sublime doctrine should be more explicitly revealed to us by Jesus Christ, under the new dispensation.

In His infinite goodness He deigned to lift up a corner of the veil that hides the mysteries of His eternal essence from us, and to communicate to us one of the profoundest secrets of His divine nature; a secret by which we are enabled to realize more perfectly the infinite richness and felicity of His life.

The utter solitude and isolation that *seemed* to characterize the eternal existence of God, and which was so difficult for man to reconcile with his ideal of perfect happiness, at once disappears before the appearance of this newly revealed doctrine. We now learn that God is not, and never really was, alone. During that untold and unthinkable duration before angels or men were made, God was not without society. He was not without companionship. On the contrary, He enjoyed the most perfect intercourse, wholly independently of all creatures; an intercourse, in fact, so supreme and adequate, that the creation of angels and men could add little or nothing to it. Indeed, the intercourse between God and creatures could never have satisfied the infinite capacity of the Supreme Being. Between Him and the very highest of His creatures, there stretches out an infinite distance. It is impossible that God should ever be able to make

Himself adequately known to any finite being; or that any finite being should be able to communicate with God, as with an equal; as well hope to pour the entire ocean into the hollow of one's hand. Only an infinite Person can really stand on a level with the infinite. Only an infinite Person can be the recipient of an infinite thought, or of any infinite communication. Only an infinite Person can know and be known, can love and be loved, in an infinite measure.

God may be loved by creatures, but not adequately; not as He deserves; not as His nature demands. A love, full enough, broad enough, and deep enough, to fill and flood His own Being, must come from an infinite Person: from one just as truly God as Himself.

Something distantly analogous to this may be learned from our own experience. A bride may be, *in a certain sense*, loved by her pet dogs and birds. She may pass happy moments in their company. But will such mean things satisfy her? No! Her heart needs something more than the affection of an irrational animal, a creature so far below her. She craves for the love of man; *i. e.*, for one of *a like nature* with herself. She hungers for the love of a *human* being; of one who can understand her, and sympathize with her, and share her feelings, and who, like *herself*, possesses intelligence and reason and free will, and who in every sense is her equal.

So in like manner, God could never possess complete and infinite happiness, if loved only by mere creatures, by beings, that is to say, infinitely below Him. Being Himself infinite He required the society, the companionship and the love of an infinite person; without which infinite happiness would be but a word, and not a divine attribute at all. How is such companionship possible? No one could have guessed or imagined were the solution not borne in upon us by the revelation of the mystery of the adorable Trinity. It announces and asserts a plurality, while, at the same time, it declares an absolute and essential unity. This at once solves the difficulty. Although the doctrine

is above reason, it is not opposed to reason. It involves no contradiction. For observe: The Church does not declare that which is one to be at the same time three: nor does she teach that which is three to be also only one. No. She proclaims and enforces the doctrine of strict unity in the Supreme Being, only she goes on to explain that this unity, which is ever absolute and unbroken, attaches to the *nature* of God and to the nature only. At the same time she proclaims a plurality, but the plurality attaches to the *Persons* and to the Persons only. Hence no violence is done to reason.

To say that three Persons are but one Person, or to say that one God is in reality three Gods, would be a contradiction and an impossibility. But then the Church does not say anything of the kind. All she does declare is that one *God* is three *Persons;* and that three *Persons* are but one *God;* which may indeed be incomprehensible, but which in no way involves a contradiction. From the foregoing considerations it is clear that the divine and infinite Persons constitute a true society, unique in its kind; a society whose members are in the most perfect manner, equal, related, and worthy of each other, and which therefore is the infinite, unattainable, eternal and essential ideal of all other societies.

Let us now express the doctrine a little more explicitly. The Church teaches that there exists only one God; infinite in all perfections; and that in this one God there are three perfect and distinct Persons. They are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Holy Ghost; and the Holy Ghost is neither the Father nor the Son. The Father is truly God; the Son is truly God; the Holy Ghost is truely God. Yet there are not three Gods. There is but one only God. How can that be? We know not. How can we explain it? We are unable to explain it. This is where the mystery comes in.

There is further a certain relationship between the

Persons. Thus the Son is begotten of the Father: He is related to Him by a process of divine generation. Does this make the Father more ancient than the Son? No. Does it imply that the Father must have existed before He begot the Son? No. For neither the Father nor the Son had any beginning whatsoever. They together with the Holy Ghost, always were, are, and ever will be; all equal; none superior, none inferior, and without any "before" or "after." The Father is eternal; the Son is eternal; the Holy Ghost is eternal. Yet, there are not three eteranls, but only one eternal.

Similarly, the Holy Ghost proceeds from both Father and Son, yet He is the same Lord and God as they are. Though He proceeds from them, He is in no sense inferior; they are in no way anterior or superior. The Father is omnipotent, and omniscient, and eternal and infinite. The Son is omnipotent, and omniscient, eternal and infinite. The Holy Ghost is omnipotent, omniscient, eternal and infinite. Yet there are not three omnipotents, nor three omniscients, nor three eternals, nor three infinites; but one only God, who is at once omnipotent, omniscient, eternal and infinite.

The divine Persons are indivisible, inseperable, and so united in one nature, that where one is the rest must be. Though indivisible, they are distinct, because the Persons are different, though the nature is the same. That is to say: No divine Person can separate His personality from His nature. Hence, where one Person is, there also must be the divine nature. But the one nature is, and must ever be, common to the three Persons; consequently the other two Persons must be equi-present there likewise.

The whole question hinges upon the unity of essence and the plurality of Persons, as may best be realized by a concrete example.

Carefully consider then the following doctrine: Jesus Christ is truly man; but He is also truly God. Then, are God the Father and God the Holy Ghost

also man? No. By no means. But why not? For the simple reason that it was not the *nature* of God that became man, that nature which is common to all three; but it was the *Person* of God the Son, that Person who is not common to the three, but is distinct and individual.

Now let us turn to our second illustration; *viz.*, the Holy Eucharist. As every well instructed Catholic knows, by virtue of the words of the consecration, the bread and wine are changed into the sacred Body and Blood of Christ. Now comes the question: Is the human soul of Jesus Christ also present? Certainly it is, but not in virtue of the consecrating words, which do not even refer to it; but because since the resurrection, Body and Soul are inseparable. In short, where the Sacred Body is, the Soul of Jesus Christ must also be. This is what theologians express by the word "concomitance." And what shall we say about the divinity of Christ? That is also present, and for the same reason; *viz.*, because where the Body, and, in fact, the entire humanity of Jesus Christ is present there also must be present the divinity. No power can separate them. Then are the Eternal Father, and the Holy Ghost also truly present in the Blessed Sacrament? Dear brethren, consider for a moment for yourselves, in the light of the principles already laid down, and you will at once see that the answer must be in the affirmative.

Observe: There are not three Divine Essences, but only one. Hence it must follow, that wherever that one divine essence is, there must be all three Persons. The nature of God cannot be parcelled out among three. No such division is so much as possible. But since there is only one nature or essence, wherever that nature is, there also must be equally present each of the Divine Persons. But, in the Blessed Sacrament there is most certainly the divine substance or nature, then there must also be, not in virtue of the words of consecration, but by concomitance, not only God the Son, but also God the Father and the Holy Ghost.

If we speak always of the presence of Jesus Christ, and of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, and but seldom mention, in this connection, the other members of the Trinity, it is only because the Sacred Body and Blood of Jesus Christ alone are present *by virtue of the words of institution,* and the sacred Body and the Sacred Blood were assumed by the Sacred Person alone, and not by the Father or the Holy Ghost.

Theologians teach that all acts of God upon the creation, *i. e.,* all acts *ad extra,* must be attributed equally to the three divine Persons. Hence the visible and the invisible universes are the work of the triune God. As a consequence, it is not be wondered at that everything, from the highest to the lowest, both in the spiritual and the natural orders, should bear some faint reflection at least of Him who fashioned them. Spiritual creatures, such as the angels and such as the souls of men, will naturally bear a more perfect image of the Trinity than material objects, since a spiritual and immaterial substance is better adapted to reflect it than any other. This is undeniable. Yet there are some traces of the mystery of the Adorable Trinity to be detected even in the visible creation around us, as may easily be demonstrated.

That the image and likeness of God is to be found in our immortal soul, is a fact too well known to you all, to need any development here. So, passing that by, let us approach a truth not so generally recognized by the majority of Christians. I mean the remarkable fact that even inanimate nature and material things likewise, disclose some traces of the infinite Creator who called them into being.

Whether we look out over the vast universe, in the midst of which we live; or whether we confine our study to the little orb, in which the force of gravity holds us prisoners all our lives, we shall be obliged to conclude that all is ruled by a certain trinity in unity.

That is to say, all nature, and every object in nature, breaks up into a threefold division, while at the same time these three divisions are bound together in a true unity. But before descending to details, let us throw a glance at Creation, as a whole. By "creation" we, of course, understand all that God's hands have made; in short, all that exists outside God Himself; all that is not God. All these objects fall under one common denominator. They form one single thing, *i. e., the* creation. Nevertheless, from this one designation, common to all, as from a single stem, they branch out into three, and only three necessary divisions. For, however numerous and varied and unlike creatures may be, every single creature necessarily ranges itself under one of three heads. Every creature is either (1) wholly spiritual, as are the angels and archangels; or else (2) wholly material, as the metals, the rocks, the seas and the mountains, or else (3) partly spiritual and partly material, as man, who unites the two in a single personality, his soul being spiritual, and his body material.

Selecting the lowest of these divisions, we will now briefly consider how the Trinity is reflected in simple matter. I soon discover that matter exists in three, but only in three different states. Though always matter, yet it assumes three, and only three, possible forms. Here is a rock. It is hard, tough and stubborn. That is matter under one of its forms. Beyond the rock, lie the waters of the great ocean. These waters are soft, yielding, and of a totally different character. Water is as truly matter as is the rock; but it is matter in another of its forms. Then above the water and the rocks is the air. Here we have matter, as truly as before, but it is in another, a third condition. It is more rarefied and subtle and lighter, and more obedient to every external impulse than even the water. From this it is clear that matter exists, but not always in the same state. It may exist in the *solid* state, or in the *liquid* state, or in the state of gas or *vapor*. How many states are these? Three. Yet

these three include all. A fourth state cannot be so much as imagined.

Here is a piece of ice. It is solid. Expose it to the influence of the sun; it passes into the liquid state; apply a still fiercer heat and it disappears in the form of vapor. Instead of a piece of ice, drop a lump of gold or silver or lead or of any other metal whatsoever into the melting pot; and it may be made to pass through the same three stages as the ice. The only difference is that a considerably intenser heat is required, first to melt, and then to vaporize metals. There is no doubt but that, given heat sufficient, *the entire earth* and all it contains, and every material substance, may be resolved not only into liquid, but also into vapor. Indeed scientists assure us that it was as vapor, or, as some express it, "as a gas cloud" that the earth first began its independent existence; yet, in all these different states it ever remains the same substance. There is consequently a *unity* of substance and a *trinity* of condition—one in essence; three in state. Thus a trinity and unity embraces all material things.

Now take any substance you please, say a rock or a mountain, and you will observe how this triune law is manifested in yet another way. Every material substance possesses three and only three dimensions. In the pebble I pick up off the road, as well as in the colossal sun shining in the heavens, there is, and must be, length, breadth and thickness. In fact all visible things, of whatever character and variety, are contained by these dimensions; and it is just as impossible to increase as it is to reduce the number. Except as contained by these three, no material substance can exist. One cannot even imagine such substances with four or with two, or with any number but just three. A piece of gold may be beaten extremely thin; but, in addition to its length and its superficial breadth, it *must* possess some thickness; since length and breadth without thickness, is nothing but a figment of the mind.

Let us pass to consider how material substances are composed, so far as their external form and shape are concerned. The answer is, of (1) lines, of (2) surfaces and of (3) solids. These are the three ideas that we derive from the most cursory glance at the visible universe around us. If, further, we examine these three in detail we shall find that each in its turn discloses in itself a unity and trinity. A single straight line, for instance, is a single whole, but it contains three and only three essential parts. For what is a straight line but two distinct points, and the space between them? Every conceivable line *must* have (1) a beginning, or a point at which it starts; (2) an end, or the point at which it terminates, and (3) the distance between. Try and imagine any single straight line that is not made up of these three parts. Impossible! You cannot.

A trinity and unity forms also the essence of every surface. If we wish to enclose a space by straight lines, what is the very least number of such lines that we need employ? Three. No space can be enclosed, and no surface formed, with less than three lines. That is the minimum. And if we examine the matter more closely, we shall find that every surface, enclosed by straight lines, is in reality, either a single triangle, or else two or more triangles placed side by side. Take, for instance, the very page which you are reading. What is it but two right-angled triangles, united at either base? Draw an imaginary line right across the page from one corner to the opposite, and the two triangles are at once recognizable. A pentagon is a combination of three triangles; a hexagon a combination of four; in fine, *every* rectilinear figure, when analyzed, may be resolved into a collection of triangles. Thus a trinity controls all surfaces, as well as all lines. And we have already shown it also enters into the composition of all solids, which necessarily possess (1) length, (2) breadth and (3) thickness.

These few examples might be enormously multi-

plied*, but time will not permit us to enlarge further upon this fascinating theme. Let me, however, before concluding, beg you to bear in mind that the threefold divisions, of which I have spoken, are not arbitrary divisions of one's own inventing. They are ingrained in the very nature of things; and exist independently of us and will continue to exist in spite of us. They are just as deeply seated as any other essential characteristic and the more closely we examine them the more clearly we perceive the imposibility of evading this ubiquitous shadow of the Trinity in Unity, and the Unity in Trinity, which falls upon everything which God has made.

We will conclude with two singularly interesting illustrations. The one has to do with organic life in general; and the other, with the special life of each individual human soul. Taking organic life first, we see at a glance, that it is a single stem with three totally distinct branches. There is (1) *vegetable* life, enjoyed by all kinds of trees, shrubs and plants; then (2) there is *sensitive* or purely animal life, possessed by all kinds of birds, beasts, fish, reptiles, etc., and (3) lastly, there is *rational* life, a special prerogative of men of all races and languages and colors. This is no fanciful division. The one idea "life" is present in all; yet it exhibits itself in three several ways. No one can discover a fourth kind of organic life. There are just three: no more and no less.

Now let us consider an individual human soul, over whose destinies this same mysterious trinity holds sway. The soul enters the earth possessing only its *natural* life: then the waters of Holy Baptism flow over it, and, at once, it is lifted up above nature and begins to live the life of *supernatural grace;* which is totally different to the life of mere nature. If it perseveres it dies at last to the world, but only to enter upon a new and still sublimer life, *viz.*, the life of

* For many other instances, see chapter VI in my book: "Thoughts for All Times."

eternal glory in Heaven. Now observe. It is one and the same soul; yet it lives in succession three distinct lives. It has three, but only three modes of being. The same individual soul is at one period leading the life of nature, then the life of grace, and finally the life of eternal glory. The lives are three. The soul is one. There is unity, since the individual remains identical; there is trinity because the states are distinctly three.

At present we can see the image of the Blessed Trinity in creation but obscurely, since the eyes of our soul are bandaged; yet even now, we see enough to fill us with a holy wonder and admiration, and to excite within us a longing for the future, when the veil will be drawn aside, and when the light of glory will fill and flood our soul with a fuller and deeper knowledge of the untold splendors of God's uncreated and unparalleled magnificence. Let us close our discourse with the celestial song of the Seraphim, as heard by Isaias, and adore the thrice holy Trinity, as we repeat —if not with our lips—at least with our hearts and minds: "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of thy glory."

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